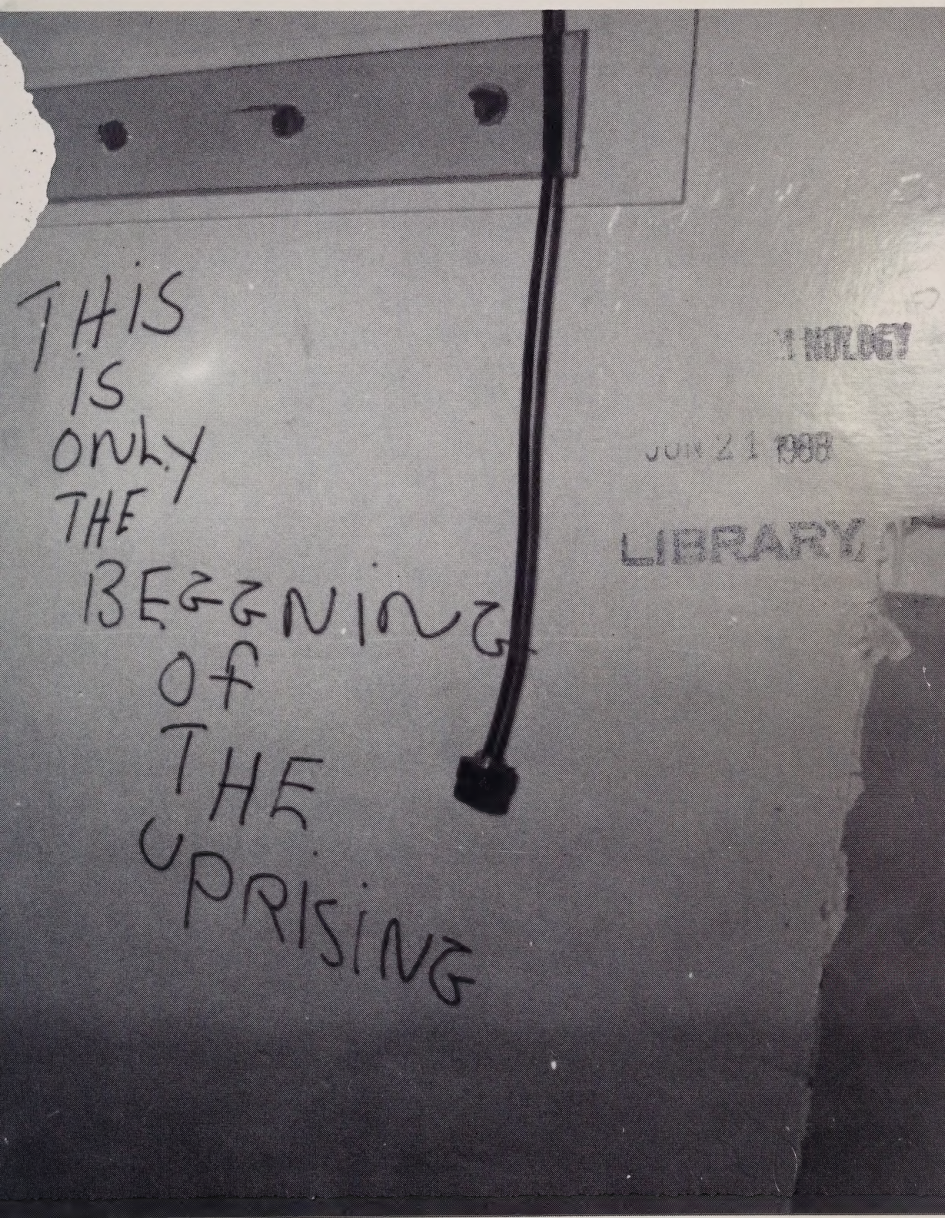


PRISON JOURNAL NO.7

1988



PRISON LITERACY

Ethos

Prison, like so many other of our social institutions, is a microcosm of society at large. We believe, no doubt in part because we are forced to live or have chosen to work within its boundaries, that it is a most potent and revealing one; and hence springs our desire to use **Prison Journal** to explore the world of imprisonment and to attempt to understand the psychological, social, and political relations which lead to its impasse.

The language of prison—lock and key, gate and pass, penitence and punishment, release, parole, inmate, rehabilitation—strains at the limits of metaphor and euphemism, just as the reality of prison pushes against the walls of society's often too easy compartmentalizing of normality and deviance, legality and criminality. To put the case bluntly, the prison is a symbol of our collective failure as a society: where better to look than into the complexities of this dark symbol for some clarity on our shared plight?

Prison Journal has three aims: to provide an arena for the captive voices of those who are imprisoned, to be a spotlight of raw illumination on their condition, and to offer a forum to all those concerned with carrying out a serious examination of the phenomenon of the prison. Edited by prisoners of the Pacific Region of the Canadian federal penitentiary system and by the staff of Simon Fraser University's Prison Education Program, **Prison Journal** invites contributions from prisoners everywhere.

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Prison Journal
No. 7
Prison Literacy
1988

The microcosm of the prison, precisely because it is such an extreme distortion and simplification of social reality, isolates the fundamental issues at stake in the literacy debate.—Peter Murphy

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Prison Literacy

That old issue, the so-called problem of illiteracy, has once again, rather belatedly and somewhat surprisingly, become a *cause célèbre*: studies dealing with it appear on the *New York Times* bestseller list, films and TV commercials tellingly advertise it, various government and "grass roots" initiatives are trumpeted An historical reminder is in order here: in the late nineteenth century a successful war against illiteracy was waged; industry required a literate work force, and the state supplied it. Today's second coming of the illiteracy phenomenon raises a host of new issues.

As is so often the case, the microcosm of the prison, precisely because it is such an extreme distortion and simplification of social reality, isolates the fundamental issues at stake in the illiteracy debate. There are two main schools of thought: the first (and most dominant) adopts a rather narrow, mechanistic view of literacy as simply the ability to read and write in a functional way at an arbitrary grade-school level; on the other hand, the second adopts a very broad philosophical perspective so that literacy virtually becomes an all-purpose term which can be linked with any adjective one chooses, culminating in the vexatious yet crucial concept of cultural literacy. (See the review of Harvey Graff's study.) The two approaches cannot, of course, be neatly separated.

So far, prison literacy programs have understandably concentrated on the narrow definition: mandated Adult Basic Education (ABE) quotas, for example. But, as Jonathan Kozol has so passionately argued in *Illiterate America*, literacy can only legitimately be termed "functional" if it is linked with the larger issues raised by "literacy for human liberation." The political, economic and ethical problems posed by the disenfranchisement of those sentenced without parole to "verbal servitude" must be faced. Prison literacy must also be regarded in two fundamental ways: how to deal with the primary needs of one of the largest concentrations of adult illiterates in our society; and, just as significant, how to make people more literate about the nature and role of the prison itself—hence, **Prison Journal's** abiding concern with the creative uses of literacy, as well as with the far-reaching questions of cultural literacy.

It is a fact, pleasant or not, that in our society literacy is not necessarily related to the reading of works of literature. Hans Magnus Enzensberger has provocatively argued that the new ruler of the social and political stage is the "second-order illiterate" who can read, but has no need of literature—manuals, bureaucratic handbooks, TV suffice. The "second-order illiterate" is socially mobile and holds in his hand the remote control of the channels of power: he is unaware of his illiteracy in larger cultural and humanistic terms simply because he doesn't have to be literate. Without

any glib romanticising, Enzensberger takes the side of the illiterate because it was illiterates who invented literature. “Its elementary forms—from myth to children’s verse, from fairy tales to song, from prayer to riddle—all are older than writing. Without oral tradition, there would be no poetry; without illiterates no books.” In this issue of **Prison Journal**, the interview with Peter Farrell and the samples of his writing illustrate some of these points. Technically “semi-literate,” Farrell’s prose has a startling poetic power. Men in prison, generally, have a particular need for literature. Those who are powerless and who have been inscribed by the state need to voice themselves. There is a remarkable scene in *Men in Prison* that describes Victor Serge staring at an ostensibly blank wall which, upon closer inspection, reveals a labyrinth of microscopic scrawls by generations of prisoners who had to say something, however crudely hieroglyphic. Serge translates for those who cannot yet speak for themselves. The interview with “Roy” in this issue makes it clear that the struggle to become literate requires not only a reassessment of one’s own background, but a need to comprehend the larger cultural backdrop. This is the “beggning of the uprising,” not in terms of the crude graffiti of a prison riot, but the beginnings of an articulate and literate dialogue. The final interview in this issue, with Brian Fawcett, poet, novelist, cultural critic (and sometime lecturer in prison university courses), underlines Fawcett’s quest for the literary medium which would allow the most effective access to issues that probe well beyond the range of the simply literary. Fawcett’s remarkable docu-novel, *Cambodia*, also reviewed here, explores some of the more terrifying as well as humorous aspects of “second-order illiteracy” within the hi-tech “global village.”

All the contributions to **Prison Journal No. 7** testify, in one way or another, to a need for critical literacy. And, in a prison context, there is necessarily a political edge: to adapt Greek mythology, prison words have not forgotten that their origins were in the sowing of the “dragon’s teeth” from which sprung the symbols of writing. Les Merson and Leo Compain’s plea for cultural literacy develops a distinctively “Freirian” dimension. Bill Dunne’s *Letter from Marion* is an eloquent attack on the lockdowns of silence at that supermax end-of-the-line. If we are all prisoners in some new variant of Plato’s cave in which the flickering images on the wall are now from a TV monitor, then the ones who have the best chance of leading us back to the world will be “second-order literates,” those who can combine a poetic literacy with an enlightened cultural literacy.

Peter Murphy

What you are about to hear is True and Faults

Sunday September 20th, 1987
H Block

It began in the New Westminster holding cells for court, it was a 8 X 10 cell, that held one 60 year old man. He was lying on a platick couch using a roll of toilet paper as a pillow telling me of his lifes tragites and why he was in lock up. He said that he was at home ready to take his life with a butcher knife he had take but end of the knife and place it against the wall and was going to run into it with his body. But just then two Rouckie cops intered from the front door of his house, saying put down the knife. The old man replied come and take it from me. The two cops pulled out their guns and said again put down the knife before you hurt yourself. The old man said go ahead and shutt seveal times saying that he wouldn't put down the knife, can't you see that I am trying to take my life, leaning forward and backwards. Just then they had desideed to fire on him twice in the stumet and once in the lower stumet that shot through the lift cheek of his ass. The old man was momble something as he drop to the floor, you duty basters you shot me.

Three days later wacking up in a hospital bed piss off at the world closing his eyes and their he dide.

Peter Farrell

looking out a window

looking out the window of my apt i could see in to the Country Jug and i was watching the inmate in his cell putting pictures on the walls and getting frusated with doing time.

day after day i would go to the window to see if it might be different for the person who sit in confinmat

but i had other thing's to do then look out of window's.

“yes i had all the reasons to be looking out windows but not to watch people doing time. my thing was to take care of a little matter for Mr. Nelson at the courthouse that day and that is why i had been looking out my apt window for day's on end, but the time came for me to do my job for the head crime boss of Beverly Hills “Mr. Nelson.

As the story was told to me, this guy “Nick Cairo” was going to tell the cops all about “Mr. Nelson’s business in the under world and ‘i was to see that’ that didn’t happen.

and now come the time for me to get this rat out of the picture and i did by leting him have it right out side at the court house three times in the head and i started to run down the street to get my car but i know that i would never make it”

the cops wear all over me and letting bullits go like crazy and “now in here in hell doing the time of my life and i mean the rest of my life.

Peter Farrell

this stors is writen by me
 PETER DEMITRO,
 (the master)
 of modern mystery
 (by hook or by crook)
 or by me

8-4-87

it all started in 1987 form vancouver b.c too montreal.
 the gypsy had there hand's in toevery thing form telling card reading to
 steeling money form old man and all of the above, but that wasn't good
 enough for them,
 they wanted it all , like running all the afterhuor's in the city's, so that they
 could sail all the hot good's to mark's and sucker's ,,,,,,,
 and that is waer I come in to this story baby?,
 Iwas to sat every thing up for the family's in these city's ,
 and Idid with no problems from the pig's in these city's because the
 family's waer giving me the money to pay them off and go about my
 bussiness,
 and they had on problems with taking the money, because they waer just
 has happy to see me has Iwas to see them.
 but it didn't matter to me any way bacause I had a degree in murder to go.
 murder against the grain. murder makes the wheels go round.

the only trouble Imight have was from the bishop family,
 but I could control these greedy and deadly family,
 nick bishop was the frist one for me to get out of the picture and then work
 up form there,
 it wasn't going to be easy to get this guy, so I calld my friend, . paul gooday.

he would do the job with no questons asked about it , and thats what I liked
 about him ,
 wellafter I'd talk to him he told me that it would take three days' to do the
 job and that would be the end of it.
 but paul didn't make out has will has he might have if he didn't get a killed

by nick bishop
any way people , I desided too do the fucking thing my self ,and do it righ,
once an for all.

nick didn't know me so it would be easy to get him,
by the way i'm bug's bunny
and when Iseen nick in the plag ets after hours nighculb I waited out side
for him

and when he came out Ilet him have it three times in the head,
and then lift the seen

like a good little bunny.

the end

Peter Farrell

An Interview with Peter Farrell

by Peter Murphy and Janet Urquhart
Kent Institution

Peter Murphy: Peter, first I want to ask you about your Gypsy background.

Peter Farrell: Yes. It consists of a lot of stealing, a lot of harm. Basically, my family came from Romania and the way I was taught was that the better the thief you are the more respect you get.

PM: So you got a lot of respect?

PF: I got my image. But it's also hard because you never know how long you gonna be in one town for, because it's not really up to you to settle down once you are a kid. But as you get older it's your choice to which you wanna do. So you wanna stay.

PM: Are you talking about Toronto? Is that where your family lives?

PF: Yes, Toronto. My family has been all over the United States and Canada. And, basically, that's why I never got no education.

PM: You were obviously taught certain things about stealing. But you weren't taught how to write or read?

PF: No. They don't like to have anything to do with the white race too much. Because they feel that it's a bad environment. In other words, it messes up their culture trip.

PM: So, literacy is not good for stealing? I mean, you could become a highly successful thief without it?

PF: Well, you gotta understand the stealing part in the Gypsy way of life is basically pickpocketing, manipulating, fraud, body work, roofing, ceilering. Body work is what we are doing with the work on cars with cheap bundle. Sometimes we don't even use the bundles. It all depends on what race you are. There is about like twenty different races out there. Initially, the one that does the worst work would be the Mexic guy and those are from Mexico. And they use plaster in bundle and make the first bump in the head and the plaster comes up.

PM: To be a Gypsy—as you have described it so far—means that, in addition to the thieving, you also do a lot of straight jobs like roofing and body work.

PF: That's how you get the connections. Like for instance, when I was in

Montréal and they have these big parties for the Gypsies, you see like four or five police. They are detectives that would be in charge of like the vice squad and they pass up the summons as in fortune telling. And you see them there sitting with the elders and taking like a big bottle of Crown Royal and 200-300 under the table. So me, myself, I don't like that shit. I think a crooked cop is worse than a harnessed cop.

PM: Gypsies have to be on the move all the time and don't send their children to school. Are you told stories by your parents or elders? Is there a literature—not written down—a body of stories that all of you would be told?

PF: Stories consist mostly of the old country and of things that matter in this world. Like spirits running up against some kind of person who you feel is not totally all there. You know, stuff like that. Stories of great Gypsies that had wealth—unbelievable wealth—and yet, you know, when they died they hid it so no one else would get it. Stuff like that. Myself, the only stories I was ever told were from my grandfather because the way it goes it's families from one race stay together. They don't like to buck into the family for the simple reason—it's like the Italian thing now. Everybody is dropping diamonds to get rid of their problems quicker. You see, what I'm saying it's a lot quicker to drop diamonds than to kill them.

PM: Drop a diamond?

PF: Yes, in other words, call the cops and straighten it up that way.

PM: Two pieces of yours particularly impressed me: "What you are about to hear is True and Faults" and "this stors is written by me." They do relate to Gypsy culture in a way—the stories about prisons and gangsters and the whole romantic thing about crime, money, and power, the gang life. Would you talk about your own writing and how you think it might relate to your own background?

PF: The way I see my writing—all it does for me in my background is it points out the corners of players, a sucker, an eligible mark and a potential friend until it gets out of the pocket. In other words, what I mean about getting out of pocket is backstabbing, telling somebody else your business.

PM: You see your writing as basically trying to explain things to yourself that happened before or is it just a way to get your mind off things?

PF: It's just a way to keep my mind off the penny shit that goes on in here. But when I do write, some of it is true but I don't say which is true because if I was to do that, I'd get stinged from my family if I was to write about everything that happened in my life.

PM: You didn't learn how to read or write until quite recently?

PF: Yes.

Janet Urquhart: He's just finishing up Adult Basic Education Level One. When Peter came to class, he had very strong verbal skills and a really strong memory and so he got in there and made something happen to the language—he knew how to use it. And there was a sense of frustration because he knew a lot of words and was trying to guess which one was on the page. You started using the language in a really fresh way. All of a sudden you had this tool that you suddenly got to use.

PF: Well, it could be that but I just think it's this. You see I'd got into so many different situations, Janet, out on the streets and suddenly trying to put them on paper, I'd never do that. I just ... stored them back in my mind. And now that I am dealing with this—and you keep asking me for stories—it just leaves me to think, “Well, shit, I don't wanna write about this because this here is negative as far as I am concerned.” So I'd rather write something positive, yet negative, and it all works out in the end for somebody in here. If you try and work something out it never does work out for the right.

JU: What do you mean it works out “positive” for somebody or “negative” for someone else?

PF: No matter if you are a sucker and you get burnt, you learn by it. And what you learn, then you stay away from that area until you feel that you got enough ability to go over there and deal with it to where you can work somebody and then you are feeling good. And just by me writing the stuff is basically little bits of pieces of things that I have experienced out there. And it's powerful shit, man. I mean it really is 'cause, once you feed it into your brain, it's not good enough because then you wanna do it. You know, you wanna get pieces of pie and basically I put my pieces of pie now on paper. That's all I have to put it on.

PM: When you get out of here, would you go back and join your family immediately?

PF: Yeah, I do got plans. I got plans not to do nothing there for the simple reason you got this thing where the elders there are getting ready to kick the bucket, so to say. Then they pick someone who has more ability to see things. You know, pick up on things. And, I don't know, maybe this is why I am in jail now. That's where I was sitting when I got, you know, before I got busted. I was the guy who had everything because I think there was nothing that I didn't have that I didn't want within my own family. I mean, as crazy as this sounds, you know, I didn't have to do anything. Like when I wanted something done, I asked my older brother to do it.

JU: Were you elected the family leader then?

PF: There they call us the King. You see, that's what it is.

JU: So you were selected by your elders.

PF: By my mother and her brothers. And, you know, I didn't really want the position. I can break away from this but that doesn't necessarily mean I have to break away from the family.

PM: You can break away from the leadership role but still be in touch with the family?

PF: Yes, but with less respect. But I'd sooner have less respect than be like that for the rest of my life. See. I tell you where the leader is in the Gypsy family. This is all he does for that family. He schools them on how to case out some kind of classy crime. Let's say till they grow up and build a family and then they may help.

Say you are a Gypsy guy and this is your second cousin and this is your wife and you beat her up and I come into the picture because I'm the leader of this family. And I say, look if you disrespected her mother and father by beating her up I'm gonna charge you with glubber which is in English a penalty for beating her up. And you gonna have to give this \$1500 to her mother and father for disrespecting her like that in front of your family as well as hers. And by doing that that makes everything ... but deep down inside you know ... over with because she's gonna be left with scars and your pockets gonna be empty and I am only sitting here saying, "What a bunch of bullshit!" And basically that's what it comes down to.

I mean family is family. Every other race I know they do this. They take their family, their mother and their father when they get old because they make shit and piss in the bed, whatever the case may be, and they put them in an old folks' home. So someone else can take care of them. And, ever since I have been around, I haven't known one Gypsy family to do this, even those from Venezuela and they are a crazy tribe. And these are the kind of people that smell, they are very ugly people. Yet they are very religious people because they believe in the spirits a lot and they deal with voodoo and that's how they make good money: by sucking this voodoo off on other people and putting hatches on them. Because that shit does exist, man. I mean it's been around longer than you and me. So, you know, it's happening.

But then there are some things in the Gypsy way that are great and that's when you go to get married. You got to buy your wife and the fee on your wife may be on how smart she is. Like is she a good pickpocket? Can she tell fortunes together? Does she know how to commit fraud over the phone to get plane tickets? You see, stuff like that.

JU: It's your job to enforce the tribe's laws, to punish violations of it?

PF: Yes. And me myself, you know, I wouldn't want to take no one out. Because I used to see what that has done to my grandfather. I mean this guy used to wash his hands all the time and I asked myself, "Why is he doing

this?" And then one day I said to my mother, "Why is the old man always washing his hands?" And she says, "It's because he took a few people along and thinks that he has got blood on his hands."

And ever since I used to see that I was thinking to myself, I don't want to be no leader. If anything, you know, come to the side and ask me and I help you out but I put myself out there on Junk Street where they can I'd sooner be able to settle with a partner because that's a smart way to go.

PM: Gypsies are people who move—they are always on the move and they have to move often to get away from people such as the courts and the police. To be stuck in a place like this must be staggering. You spoke earlier about how you use your writing to make some sense out of putting in time here. I wondered if there were any other ways which help you do time.

PF: This is really gonna sound crazy, Peter. This is how I fill time. Like, when I'm going to school this is what I do: I usually have a cup of coffee and I sit at that table and, before I come out of myself, I kick back and watch these guys walking back and forth. And I say to myself, "I'm gonna start doing ..."—I do this all the time—I read people you know. And they come by me and I'll say, "This guy is a typical. He ain't done nothing, he ain't been nowhere and he's gonna end up staying here for the rest of his life."

PM: Yes, I know.

PF: OK. But I can just sit at that table man and people will just stop and they'll say, "OK, Pete, what's happening?" And I'll say, "Not too much." And the next thing I know is they are running some game on me. "Hey man, I got this, I wanna sell it." So actually, I see myself as being attractive to the little game that goes on in here. And I'm saying to myself, let me play because it'll get my mind off this bullshit. But mostly I just keep back and listen to music and write my family.

PM: Could you actually write letters to them prior to your classes with Janet?

PF: Yeah. But they would be short. You know like, "Hi, I'm fine. Don't worry. I'll see you when I see you. Bye." Stuff like that. But as far as in-depth, no.

PM: Now your letters are?

PF: Quite different, man. Two pages; sometimes three. It all depends on what's on my mind.

JU: Can they read too?

PF: My mom can read.

JU: But your brothers and sisters can't.

PF: Well, two of my brothers can read. But my oldest brother Dan can't. In all the time I've ever been here Dan never sent me one card, one Christmas card, one birthday card, one any kind of card because he can't read and he can't write. And yet, this guy is almost thirty-eight years' old and he sells cars, like he is going out of style.

But he's trained how to fill up a bill of sale or a receipt. That's all he knows, man. And he figures that's all he needs to know. And if he gets a cheque, well, all he's gotta do is sign his name. But as far as getting his driver's licence and shit, you have to have somebody else to do the form.

JU: Why, Pete, did you finally decide to come to school?

PF: Why? Because I want to improve myself. I wanna write a book. I wanna write a couple of books. I wanna write a book on the ignorance that I see coming from the Gypsy people. That they leave off on the youngsters which is not right. And they never accept change, I mean ultimate change. You know, they are always staying with the same old game which is bullshit.

I mean, when I was out there I wasn't stealing as much as some Gypsies were stealing, but I've also seen things that were profitable and legitimate and, me by getting my education done, now I see it even more. Because I want it. I want it badly. Like I wanna write a book indicating my experience, jumping out of the Gypsy ways since we are a race. Being locked up and then jumping back up. You know, expecting to be brought right back to the same old gate.

JU: I was going to ask you about something that came up earlier. I think it was about the relationship of the story telling and the fortune telling and how you talk and how you write. You have a strong memory for things; that's very common for people who don't read and write. But also there is this other voice—particular voice—and I keep thinking it comes from a family that's really rich in stories and it's really rich in making things up and seeing things and watching people.

PF: Story telling in my family consists of this: of some middle-aged man who knows everything and there is no way to pull the wool over his eyes. And he may tell you stories of how he sent his two sons to break the farmer's buckets one day and the following day sent the sons back to that same area to fix the farmer's buckets. Stuff like that.

But they are very religious people because they believe in the spirits a lot and that's the only kind of stories I've ever heard. Like when my grandfather was in Romania. One time, you know, he was sitting near the campfire and at the time my grandmother was in the tent. And I don't know, there came this guy, his exact duplicate and said, "I'm here to take you." And you could see the horse behind him galloping and, you know, I found it kind of hard for me to believe the scene, you know, being raised in New

York or going to all these fancy cities and getting all this game on me. And I say to myself, "OK, this old man is lying to me." But then I pull him out of the pocket. I'd say, "Hey you, are you being honest with me?" And he'd just say, "I'd never lie to you."

JU: But women tell stories, they tell fortunes?

PF: You know what kind of stories those are? Of making money, of how they got a sucker in this town and that town.

JU: Are these stories also passed on?

PF: Yes. Only to be learned by. I'd say, you learn by your past, you know. I mean, the best story I've ever heard came from Uncle Joe. And that was when he swindled all these Gypsies in the United States.

He went to Venezuela and, before he came back, he went and had blueprints figured out. And he got bank certificates from Shell and Gulf and that was a goldmine. And him and this other guy by the name of Archie Wilson, which was another Gypsy, they decided, "OK. We got a scam here. We'll go and dress with suits, with the big containers, with the blueprints, little certification tickets." And they came to stuff both Shell and Gulf. And these Gypsies are gonna think, "Hey man, let's lick it because look at these stamps, look at these blueprints, the containers. This gotta be 100% white business." And they got sucked in.

PM: Sounds like a plot for a novel. Have you read many books?

PF: Yeah. I've read about four of them.

PM: What are they?

PF: *The Godfather, The Rap.*

PM: *The Rap?*

PF: Yeah. It's a real old book. I read "Beauty and the Beast."

JU: I thought you couldn't read before you came to class?

PF: Well, I could read but I would just pass over the words that I didn't know.

PM: What was the fourth book?

PF: A book about Gypsies called *Wandering Gypsies of the World.*

PM: I look forward to reading your own book on Gypsies some day.

PF: Well, when I can get out of here and start moving.

S-o-u-n-d-s-c-a-p-e

Silence speaks to me through
the windows. It hangs like
snow shawls around
the mountain's shoulders,
blue/gray and white
in hazy distance.

There, silence is eloquent and forgiving.
It bespeaks the loudness of
what is missing: in my life and
in each and every other life.
Fill in the Blanks of your life:
fill them in with the alphabet
of rock and stone, the grammar
of peaks and cliffs and snow.

Paul Biscop

An Interview with Roy

by Hendrik Hoekema

In October 1987, I interviewed Roy, who had been imprisoned at Matsqui Institution in Abbotsford, British Columbia, for approximately two years. He would be released on mandatory supervision within two weeks of our interview. Roy, born in Vanderhoof, BC, is a twenty-eight-year-old Native from the Caribou Tribe who had lived most of his life in the Fort St James area.

After reviewing the interview transcript, I realized there were several points that I ought to have pursued further. The comments "It was all our fault and we just couldn't learn" and "I just didn't work out" bother me. Most of us tend to blame the "system"; but Roy takes the entire blame for his previous educational failures. Neither position is correct as both ignore the social and economic context in which education takes place.

The "system" in which Roy grew up encouraged Natives to drop out. And it still does—implicitly and explicitly. That a staff member encouraged Roy to do odd jobs and miss classes at the school he attended is a form of callous racism too easily covered up by paternalistic cliché. Instead of encouraging and helping Roy and others, the "system" rewards—at least, initially—with pocket-money. The necessity of cheap labour? Too many Natives and whites in provincial and federal prisons have strikingly similar stories. Yet Roy and his society pay a price: for Roy, uncontrolled drinking and a criminal conviction; for the taxpayer, the approximate total cost of two years in a federal penitentiary—\$84,000.

The only positive part of this story is that Roy decided to continue with his education inside prison and discovered he could learn.

Hendrik Hoekema

Hendrik Hoekema: Roy, tell me about your family background.

Roy: I have a family of ten brothers and six sisters and I come from a very large family. I grew up in my home town in Fort St James. I was born in Vanderhoof, the only hospital there was around. But my real home town is Fort St James.

ROY

HH: Did you live on the reserve, Roy?

R: Yes, I did. I grew up on a pretty big reserve of about 500 people.

HH: What do most people do there?

R: Most of them work in the sawmills all through the years. Mainly sawmill working and tourist guiding. And fishing and hunting.

HH: So, all the traditional occupations in the Interior. Whereabouts in the family were you? Last, middle, beginning?

R: Somewhere in the middle. About sixth, seventh place.

HH: How many of your brothers and sisters finished Grade 8 or Grade 10?

R: Well, the older ones finished their 9th and 10th. Like three of my sisters finished high school. Grade 10. No one finished Grade 12. Not that I know of.

HH: Would you have to leave the reserve to finish Grade 12?

R: Yeah.

HH: Were the ones who'd finished older or younger than you?

R: Older than me.

HH: Did you ever think of them as role models for you in trying to go to school? And did they help you a lot?

R: Yeah, they are. And they encouraged me to go back to school but they never gave me any help and I didn't ask for any.

HH: Tell me a bit about starting school.

R: I started when I was in kindergarten. In "Indian Day School" on the reserve. Then I went over to the Catholic Mission. I started there and that's where I've been going to school for up to Grade 7.

HH: Was the Catholic Mission School also on the reserve?

R: No, it was in town. It was mixed, white and Indian kids.

HH: You dropped out of school at what age?

R: Well, I finished school when I was ... thirteen.

HH: That's a really young age to quit.

R: I was working. I think I was more into work than going to school. Like I had a coach that I used to work part time for. During classes.

HH: He would pull you out of classes and you worked instead of going to classes?

R: Yeah.

HH: Did you think that that was a good idea? At the age of thirteen, I suppose you did.

R: Well, it wasn't a good idea. But at the time it was.

HH: What were your teachers like?

R: Pretty good teachers. They were really trying, too. We had nuns and after that, like, regular teachers. To make us work they would train us, really encourage us to work—but it was all our fault and we just couldn't learn.

HH: When did the part-time jobs and the other jobs start?

R: When I was twelve. It was in Grade 5 when it all started.

HH: Did you have to do Grade 5 twice?

R: Yeah, twice.

HH: What did you think of yourself at that time? Did you have problems with not doing your work?

R: Yeah. There was we weren't doing our work. There was a group of us. Only we were not into school, so I just decided to work.

HH: Did the teachers encourage you a lot or did they just sort of give up?

R: They were encouraging us and they were strict, and it just didn't work out.

HH: Were you involved in sports at all?

R: Yes, there was a lot of sports in school but most of us didn't go there or in any kind of sports. We just stand around most of the time.

HH: Holding up the wall I think they call it. Sometimes teachers use all sorts of ways to teach—by giving students lots of attention or the strap or grounding them. Did that occur a lot?

R: Yeah. Like the teachers they were really strict—the nuns. And they used thick leather, black straps and sometimes hoses too. They use them on your hands. I know one teacher in Grade 5 used to bang some heads on the walls and bring us outside and do that. And you could hear them through the wall outside.

HH: It sounds like that kind of "behavior modification" didn't work too well.

R: No. Most of them just enjoyed it.

HH: What about the teachers and family? Did the teachers talk to your parents about the problems you were having learning or about discipline

problems? Were there regular meetings between teachers and family?

R: In those days, no. They didn't have any meetings with teachers. I think the only time was once a year when you were just coming back into school again.

HH: And that was when the parents and teachers would meet and that would be about it?

R: Meet and talk. Tell our parents to encourage us to do harder work.

HH: But it sounds as if there were a little bit of laziness involved here.

R: Yeah.

HH: What about your parents? Did they encourage you to go to school?

R: Our parents really encouraged us. You know, they didn't want us to miss any school days—even in the mornings or any time. They tried really hard.

HH: What about when you quit?

R: When I quit, it was kind of hard to tell my parents because they didn't want me to.

HH: Did they object?

R: Yeah, they did. School wasn't for me at that time. I couldn't learn anything 'cause I wasn't asking for help. I think that's the main problem. And not working.

HH: Did you get a job right away?

R: Yeah. From when I was thirteen until I was sixteen, I had a part-time job.

HH: What were you doing?

R: I was still working for the school.

HH: So you were at school but not in school?

R: Yeah.

HH: Did the teachers complain about this at all or the principal? I thought it was illegal to quit school before you were sixteen.

R: Not that I know of. But we did it.

HH: You did some part-time work at the school, the kinds of things that you were already doing before you quit. Did you do any other kind of work?

R: Between the school years? No. No, that's the only part-time jobs I had.

HH: What about at home?

R: I told my parents that I'll be helping with the cleaning and getting the

kids up on time to go to school in the mornings, you know.

HH: Yeah, with sixteen kids at school that was also very useful. But they weren't that happy with you quitting school?

R: No. When I turned sixteen, I found a job in a sawmill and I continued working for them for five years.

HH: Till about twenty-one? What kind of work did you do there?

R: I worked at a green chain, sorting the lumber out. I was on stand-by. Like whoever was missing a night, I'd take his place.

HH: But they were the kinds of jobs where you didn't need, you thought, an education. The kind of jobs you could train in. You didn't need to do a lot of reading and writing.

R: Yeah.

HH: What about the people that you went to school with, roughly at the same time. Did some of those people also quit and work in the sawmill?

R: Oh, yeah. They all mainly quit about the same year I quit. Most of them got jobs too.

HH: Are we talking just about Natives now?

R: No, we are talking about non-Natives and Natives at the same time.

HH: And you did that for about five years. You're twenty-one years' old and what happens now? When did your drinking start, Roy?

R: Well, I had an alcohol problem, so I lost my job on the sawmill and I was rehired again only once. But I was laid off because sawmills were too full at that time again. I started having alcohol problems because every pay day, you know, you got drunk.

HH: Jobs, some money, and a good time.

R: A good time.

HH: So you lost the job in the sawmill—partly due to the drinking—partly due to automation.

R: I didn't actually lose my job in the sawmill. I walked off because I didn't want to get hurt down there.

HH: You thought that perhaps there was some danger while working in the sawmill. What happened then? You're twenty-one and you've got a bit of a drinking problem. And you need something to bring money in.

R: Well, after I got out of the sawmill, I continued drinking and I was collecting UI. Then that ran out. Then I didn't have nothing to do, so I applied for a job in a bar.

HH: Sounds like a beautiful place to work if you have a drinking problem.

R: Well, actually I didn't apply. I was asked if I would work there. And I didn't know where to get money so I said, "OK." And I think to myself that the bar would be a good place because sort of part of me is there, too. I worked there between four and a half and five years till about 1985.

HH: Did any problems occur in working there because of drinking?

R: Well, I started off working in a bar for a while and finally I got hired steady. No, not actually steady, but all weekends, every weekend. At first it was pretty good. It was the only job I think I could stay in for a while.

HH: Did you ever lose any of those jobs during that time period?

R: I lost a job once. Well, I was sort of fired. When I talked to them, they said that I had a drinking problem and, if I don't straighten out, I wouldn't be working for them anymore.

HH: And you kept on working there for a while. Many men have been convicted for having "substance abuse problems," as they say in the prisons. Did you think you had a drinking problem at all? Or was it just sort of a normal sequence of what people did? You know, drinking on weekends here and there.

R: It all started with my friends on the weekends and next thing you know, during the week, too. When I had my first drink, I was about twelve years' old. I guess it's normal to drink. I mean, not every day but just weekends. Like when you are around no job—say for a week, maybe even a year—then you know you just have nothing to do but just drink because when you're a teenager you think about how much years you got ahead of you. That is, if you live that long. So you slow down or continue.

HH: So we are now in 1985. You've been working in the bar off and on for the last couple of years and now you find yourself in prison. How did that happen?

R: After I left my job in the bar, I was told that I can't get the job again, so I continued drinking, heavier. Then I drank weekdays and weekends. Sometimes I was short on cash. You know, my parents, I'd stay with them for a few years and they didn't like my drinking. So I just stayed anywhere I could stay for a night. Anywhere I could drop my head.

HH: But how did you get here?

R: It started with a person that I really know and we got into an argument and I was very intoxicated and didn't remember nothing. I was in jail the next morning and I was trying to figure out: What I am in jail for? I was charged with attempted murder, they told me. I was in bad shape and they

had a priest coming to see me. They said that I was charged with attempted murder.

HH: What happened to that charge? How much time did you get for it?

R: The charge was looked into and it was dropped down to aggravated assault. I got three years.

HH: Is this your first time in the lock up or your first time convicted of any crime?

R: First time I got ever convicted and first time in jail.

HH: First time in jail. So you have never been thrown into the drunk tank at all before that?

R: In my teenage years; only a few times.

HH: A few times Two, three, four, ten?

R: It could be a dozen; more.

HH: You had the experience of being locked up; it was just temporary then. But now we're looking at three years, which is no longer temporary.

R: No.

HH: Where did the conviction take place?

R: In my home town, in Fort St James.

HH: What happened after your conviction, after you were given the three years?

R: After I was given three years, they said I'll be heading to the penitentiary. That got me thinking. I thought it would be like the stuff you see on TV. But when I got here, it's like the Holiday Inn.

HH: Really.

R: Well, you don't see it as the Holiday Inn when you first come in, but after you get used to the system, you do.

HH: You ended up going from the Remand Centre in Prince George?

R: Yeah. I spent about five months in there. And I came here to Matsqui.

HH: Why did you end up in Matsqui Institution and not somewhere else?

R: Well, I had a choice. They told me that they have three or four joints down here. They mentioned Mission, William Head, and I don't know what the other one is called, but the parole officer suggested to me that I come to Matsqui because of the education here. I said yes. That I want to learn my education if I'm gonna be inside for a while.

HH: So, it's nearly 1988. You've almost done your three years.

R: Well, I did two years out of three and I'm going out on mandatory.

HH: And that's coming up in the next week or so? Where are you gonna go?

R: I'm heading back to my home town, to Fort St James.

HH: And what are you going to do about your education?

R: I'm going to continue my education out there. In Prince George, College of New Caledonia.

HH: When you arrived here, my understanding is that you did a SCAT test—what the school calls an achievement test—and you got a very low rating on that test. I think it's level 3.3, which amounts to about a Grade 3 level on the outside. Did you feel that your reading and your writing and your ability to do math were about at that level, between Grade 3 or Grade 4?

R: Yeah. It's sort of Grade 4 when I started.

HH: In terms of math, could you do addition? Simple addition, subtraction, multiplication, simple multiplication?

R: Yeah.

HH: Division and fractions?

R: No, I hadn't reached that point. I learned it in here.

HH: You have no problems now with doing division and fractions and more of the kinds of math that you need to get a Grade 8 Certificate?

R: I learned it. I have no problems now. Now I got my Grade 9.

HH: And that's through the ABE system at Matsqui?

R: Yeah.

HH: Actually, in the last two years then you have progressed about four levels, maybe five levels of grades. What's interesting about this is that you supposedly had a Grade 7 education when you were at school at age thirteen.

R: Right.

HH: But, obviously, you didn't. If you had those kinds of problems with your learning, and you tested at about Grade 3 You think the basic problem was the one about motivation, not being interested. What do you think the problem was in terms of not learning at that point? Obviously, you can learn. You *have* learned.

R: We know that we can learn but it was just It was all our fault that we didn't want to learn. Just lazing around like all teenagers do. Right?

HH: Well, up to a certain point. What about your reading and writing skills at that time? You could read and you could write?

R: I could read. But my writing was a problem, too. I couldn't write anything. Like I couldn't write letters or anything.

HH: Were there things in school, areas of reading and writing, that you liked?

R: We used to do, like, vocabularies, that was my favourite. But the writing was really a problem.

HH: Do you think there may have been other things that could have been done? That teachers could have made this more interesting? You've gone through a process during the last two years where you have learned. What do you think the difference is between then and now?

R: I know I should have worked really hard back there and now I regret it. I should have learned. And now there is no problem for me to learn. We just needed to ask questions, like ask whenever we needed help. But we just didn't bother with that.

HH: So, you've made progress. You can read and you can write and you are working on a Grade 8, Grade 9 or Grade 10 level, depending on the subject area. You've become more confident about your abilities and you plan to continue after you get out of prison. Do you find your work satisfactory now?

R: I feel a little bit of satisfaction for it. But I think that I'm still not satisfied because I want to work up to Grade 12, I hope.

HH: What are you satisfied with?

R: Probably the amount of work. I still don't ask for enough.

HH: You're still not asking for help?

R: I think so, yes. That's the main problem.

HH: What about the assignments? Can you get them done on time? There must be a lot of homework.

R: Not now. I mean, we don't have any time limits on what we do. It's just there for you everyday and it really takes time to finish. I do some of my work, but I sort of rest for a little too long.

HH: Probably there are still some problems learning that go back to when you were a student, when you were a kid. Yeah? What do you think would help to improve your own methods? Are there things that perhaps the

teachers could do with you, that will make your learning easier or faster or better or more thorough?

R: If the teachers would give us work that we don't ask for and give us some time limit on it. Then maybe—I think that's one of it—the time limit to do this work. Then, I think, I can do it without stopping.

HH: So you need to have some goals and time limits?

R: Yeah. I think that would really help me much.

HH: Working at your own pace may not be the best thing in the world?

R: No. My own pace it's too slow. I think if I take somebody else's pace, I think I'll get somewhere.

HH: So it's a bit of a problem for you at this point. Perhaps even in going to school on the outside, even if somebody set some pace for you, you might end up having the same kind of problem Well, we all may have poor study habits and those are the kinds of things that are really difficult to change. And we work in a system where learning at your own pace seems to be the method that is used.

Do you think that you may be able at some point to continue even further? Maybe to some kind of vocational school or community college. What long-term educational goals do you have?

R: Well, in here I got a good education. I think that, if I can reach Grade 12, then I can think about going up further. Because I think that I do *really* want to be somebody some day. Like, to help people out some day.

The Gun

to Rick Wilson

Somewhere in that big world you dream about,
in the black and white of we versus them
a man loads the gun, adjusts earplugs,
and prepares to practise death.

He squeezes the trigger,
and across a gravel shooting range
bullets shred their paper human targets

But in his black and white it's not a shooting range at all.
He's in a busy street that suddenly is filled with Enemies—
Commie Pervert Sexfiend Coloured Objects up to no Good Business.

As they stare at his gun
he sees delicious terror blooming in their eyes,
made more alive by sheer mayhem,
their choked cries anthem to his private government
the men and women and small children dropping democratically
as he fires into the reality
he creates with the gun.
Then, in a burst of spontaneity
he runs patterns of pug marks
across the walls of a buildingthupthupthupthupthup
as the blood puddles,
then runs into the gutters like a torrent
of Evil Expunged.

And you tell me
What the hell,
why fight that urge?
Why not give in to those moments
of perfect belligerence?

Yeah, sure.
Why not beat up on our wives and kids

if the urge is there, why not
pick up that lead pipe over there,
why not put a hit on that perfect stranger in an alley?

In this kind of world
it's better to kick shit
than to eat it, you say,
sure that the homily covers every complexity.

Just a minute, I say. Nothing is that simple.
Do you know what happens
when we get our rocks off from TV violence,
where the staccato of the machine pistol
or the snap of a fist breaking a face
is tricked out into a song-and-dance routine
right out of Disneyland?

That's only fun, you say,
nobody real gets hurt.

I repeat it again. *Nothing is that simple.*
These days, I say, people can't tell the difference
between Art and Life
don't know how and where
each turns into lies or the beginning of absolute violence:
it may just be a slicko in a leisure suit
trying to sell us some product we don't want or need,
or it may end up with people bleeding in the street.

Maybe there was a time when the directors directed,
the producers produced
and the writers wrote.
Those certainties aren't there for us.
The set-pieces no longer stay set and predictable
and nothing chills our souls on cue
or allows us to go to our beds at night safe.

And so you shrug and say
Yeah, it's all anger now
and you want the gun for yourself.

But you don't have the gun, it's only
a picture of a gun in a magazine
you bring to frighten me
and I'm glad there's no gun here
because you're off with that man
and I don't trust either of you.

If you were out in the world
you could shake up that man,
or fuck him
(or outsmart him with your big cool brain
if you're really smart).

But you're here in this prison
because you're not very smart
and he's probably sitting outside the wire
in his windowed tower
reading that same magazine.

And he's got the gun.

Brian Fawcett

“Make the Body Move”

to Bob Andrews

For hours we argue as equals
asking what freedom of the body is
and what collective life and love and loyalty
can ask of it.

Then, abruptly, comes the knocking on the door,
buzzers bray across the razor-wire enclosures,
the guards inform me it is time to leave
so they can count the men who'll stay the night,
who've made mistakes, are innocent—and other euphemisms.

The men the guards believe belong to them.

I pack up my heavy teacher's books,
pass through the many-gated inner world of men controlling men,
pass through the final lighted steel mesh fence
into the wind and rain and dark.

You go back to your cell
to let the rhythm of the count resume.

All the way out I hear your last words:

“Make the body move,” you said.

“Feel what it is to be free.”

I walk across the parking lot
and feel no freedom,
no movement but my own,
singular and forced by cold and wet and wind.

Then I get into my car and drive home
into the swirling responsibilities
I call my life, counting them as I drive.

But later, walking home from the store
with a quart of milk under my arm
the rain starts again.

And with its rhythm the ground
 begins to move beneath me,
 neither chaos nor a count of prisoners
 but a soft dance of numberless single things:
 the glistening streets, the rain,
 the buying and carrying of milk, each
 the movement of a body greater than my own.

Sure this collusion is obscure.
 And sure, my unnumeric revelation is absurd.
 Such freedom (you will say) is nothing
 but a cruel hallucination
 set up by desire and privilege
 like any civilized and civilizing ecstasy.
 How can one man be free
 While others take the count behind barred doors and metal fences?

I see no wire mesh here,
 no bars or razor wire
 to block my casual transit through the streets,
 and for a moment the body I am in
 is sweet and wet, a home.

I walk back aimlessly,
 content with shiny cars, tattered hedges,
 the glow of television
 in the living rooms of every house.
 Each step I take a dance of neutral liberty:

I move,
 the ignorant body moves,
 and that is what there is.

Brian Fawcett

A Short Interview with Brian Fawcett

2 messages retrieved.

Message: 752133, 73 lines

Posted: 1:50pm PST, Thu Oct 29/87

To: Maureen Nicholson

From: Brian Fawcett

BRIAN FAWCETT

PRISJRNL//REF: B13

Prison Journal: We've heard that you stopped writing poetry several years ago. Can you tell us why?

Brian Fawcett: First off, you've got your information wrong. I haven't stopped writing poetry. What I've done is impose a ten-year moratorium on the publication of my next volume of verse. I did that because nobody bought my last book of verse, *Aggressive Transport*, and most of those who did buy it, didn't read it. When that happened I made what is called an "agonizing reappraisal" of my entire situation as a writer. I discovered that outside of a few greeting-card poets and Margaret Atwood, the work of no Canadian poet was being bought or read widely. On closer examination, I discovered that *I* wasn't buying or reading verse, either. When I thought it through I recognized that a) most poetry is self-expressive and boring, and therefore isn't worth reading—including much of my own—and b) the changes in data reception and interpretive habits being brought about by the Global Village are making the reading of any idea and image-dense information difficult for the public to assimilate.

Hopefully, those changes aren't permanent. My instinct is that the situation is temporary, and that as time goes on the public will recognize that GV information technologies are shallow and partial, and there will be a rediscovery and revaluation of things like poetry.

That being the situation, I decided that I had two choices. I could whine and bicker about how insensitive the world was, and how it was going to hell in a handbasket, or I could make the best of the situation, stop pretending that the world really needed to hear my poems, and begin to write things that could be read.

I haven't stopped writing verse. I've merely stopped publishing it. I figure that culturally we're in a period where verse can't be listened to—partly because there's so much of it around and most of it is obscure, arcane

and just plain boring, and partly because the culture is spinning so fast right now no one can sit down and spend the time that will allow them to penetrate its surfaces. In 1986 I published a long essay in a book John Metcalf edited called *The Bumper Book* that explains my reasons in detail, and suggests that all the other poets in Canada follow my lead. One of the reasons I gave for ceasing to publish had to do with my experiences teaching in the Prison Education Program, actually.

PJ: Oh yeah? Tell us about that one.

BF: Well, while I was teaching Creative Writing in the program I saw a lot of verse. Some of it was accomplished and intelligent, and almost all of it was sincere and heartfelt. Quite a lot of it concerned subjects that should have been of public interest, because it involved issues of life and death—pretty basic stuff. Because I was teaching these poets how to write, I began looking at their work, and verse in general, as public speech, wondering how to make it comprehensible to the general public, and knowing theirs wasn't going to be any more accessible than the overwhelming majority of verse these days is—i.e. not at all.

PJ: Why not?

BF: Well, after a lot of hard thinking, I decided that the reason it wasn't accessible—even to those people who are willing to read poetry—was because it was too interiorized. Most verse is pretty much expression of personal emotions that have been overlaid on top of a veneer of observed reality—as in, say, “I walked out along the seawall and watched the gulls wheel and turn and I felt the presence of something magical.” Now, saying such things is quite acceptable as a statement of personal feelings, but they're static—i.e. there's no action, and there's a hell of a lot more to human reality than walking along the seawall. So I decided that I'd stop publishing until I could come up with something that converted a wider range of action, and was lodged in a less private context than that of the private soul speaking his or her innermost feelings to a public that is either bored or embarrassed by them.

PJ: How are you doing?

BF: Not very well. I've been experimenting with a kind of verse that is in closer dialogue with ordinary reality than the verse I wrote prior to this decision, and the two pieces you're publishing are a couple of conversational experiments. They don't do what I want poetry to do, but they're closer than I used to be. Meanwhile, I'm writing a lot of prose, publishing most of it, and enjoying myself a lot more than I used to. I don't feel so precious.

PJ: Anything else you'd like to say at this time?

BRIAN FAWCETT

BF: No, that's about it. If you want more, have a look at the essay in *The Bumper Book*.

PJ: Okay. Thanks for talking to us.

*Next, history, delete, reply, help, etc.?
next*

*Message: 752140, 4 lines
Posted: 1:51pm PST, Thur Oct 29/87
To: Maureen Nicholson
From: Brian Fawcett*

*Okay, how was that? You asked for a one-two pager, and you've got it.
Any additional questions are okay, so long as they ain't personal.*

Cheers//bf

Wouldn't it be fun to be a Badman?

What if people feared me?

In High School,
how I'd fantasize.
Though now I feel as dirty
and untouchable, as leprous
as some people say I am.

But, I've changed
I tell you!
Good to bad to worse to
not so good to better—
than—before to to to

I feel the same—
I watch the dumb
programs on TV.
And after all that's
happened, how
I flagellate myself
for tuning in

and seeing things in colour,
as before.

Perhaps I live
projections of your fear—
it is appalling.

And it hurts when old
friends shy away.

John Rives

Letter from Marion

*Every week, the editors of **Prison Journal** receive several letters requesting, among other things, assistance in obtaining information for appeals. Many of these requests are from US prisoners. We endeavour to help where we can.*

The following letter is not a request for assistance in that sense. Mr Bill Dunne describes, from the point of view of a prisoner in Marion US Federal Penitentiary, the effects of a three year lockdown, both on the prison and its prisoners and on the US Federal Penitentiary system in general. He outlines clearly the dangers inherent in transferring all "problem" prisoners to one place and thereby creating a "concentration" situation much like the Canadian equivalent, the Special Handling Unit. He also explains how the "concentration" correctional model often denies the constitutional rights of due process or reasonable cause.

The same problems may and do occur under the "dispersal" correctional model (problem prisoners are dispersed throughout the system), in place in the US since the mid-1940s. US prison authorities argue that the return to the concentration model, used between the First and Second World Wars, would place all managerial problems in one place and facilitate control with greater efficacy. Mr Dunne, on the other hand, not only points out the excessively custodial and repressive nature of this model, he also indicates that "[T]here has been no decrease in violence in other prisons that can be attributed to Marion, and there is reason to believe the contrary is true."

*It should be noted that the British government, in evaluating the idea of the concentration system, and in rejecting it, anticipated the inherent failure of this model. (For an historical and critical background to the Marion lockdown, see J. M. Olivero and J.B. Roberts, "Marion Federal Penitentiary and the 22-Month Lockdown: The Crisis Continues." *Crime and Social Justice*, Nos. 27-28, pp. 234-55.)*

Prisons contain human beings. Because they do, both prisoners and citizens of the "outside world" must be vigilant in protecting their hard-won rights. Experiments in social control and repression inside prison or outside must not become acceptable. As Mr Dunne points out, "selective and capricious enforcement," based on the latest management system, often leads to "final solutions" and "special oppression against small and particularly vilified minorities." The editors solicit commentary on Mr Dunne's letter and its contents.

Hendrik Hoekema

The Concentration Model at Marion US Federal Penitentiary

October 27, 1986 marks the completion of the third year since the imposition of the infamous lockdown on US Federal Penitentiary (USP) Marion, a lockdown that rendered the whole prison a control unit on the pattern of the notorious H block. Since then, the rampant brutality and gratuitous maltreatment of prisoners that characterized the months following the initial lockdown have abated to relative infrequency. Imported goon squads are no longer necessary to administer the beatings, rectal probes, chainings to bunks, and other abuses on which Marion-style repression is predicated down to its most trivial details. A vastly inflated local staff costing \$10,000,000 a year is sufficient to commit these depredations on a scale presently adequate to make good their threat in coercing compliance with official edicts, however arbitrary, or in demonstrating the powerlessness of prisoners. Nevertheless, despite the decline from the early days of the lockdown, the counterproductive and needless repression of Marion is still very real and destructive. Moreover, it portends ill not only for prisoners, but for members of the general public as well.

Mainline prisoners at USP Marion are forced to spend all but eleven hours per week locked in small cells. Of the eleven, seven (one hour per day) may be spent on the narrow tier in front of the cells and four are divided between two recreation periods, only one of which is outdoors. Nor is cell time the end of the victimization of prisoners. Officials insist on pursuing prisoners into the very corners of their cells with endless senseless rules such as what property must be positioned where. Many of these decrees are unwritten and no one knows them all, a factor that contributes to their selective and capricious enforcement. (Their promulgation and application indicate that the tension and uncertainty they create is intentional.) Other harassments such as interference with mail, confiscations of property and infliction of punishment without due process, excessive and destructive searches, continual lies about issues of concern to prisoners, unreasoned denials of even mundane requests, and arbitrary cell and unit changes abound. The library is a cardboard box of paperbacks at the end of the tier. Only one correspondence course at a time is permitted. The warden laments that the meagre money required for the few who would take more is not available, despite its abundance for useless, anti-prisoner undertakings at a prison that spends \$35,000 per year per prisoner. All of it is backed up by the implied, stated, and occasionally applied threat of force.

The psychological assault of this abuse also extends to the bureaucratic elements of subsistence at Marion. There are no mandatory written procedures for either consignment to Marion or transfer to a less repressive

regimen. Officials are free to use any and all information, including bias, "confidential information" from self-serving informers, supposition and conjecture, or none at all in making their determinations. Prisoners have no input into the process and therefore cannot contest even straight-up wrong information. In the case of transfer out, there is no way for prisoners to know what is required. Administrators insist that movement to and from Marion is done on the basis of their "professional judgement," though if that were anything other than whim, a pattern would be discernible. (The vagaries of this system may be intentional, however, to facilitate surreptitious conversion to Marion's eventual main purpose, once time legitimizes and sanitizes the precedent.) Administrative appeals are routinely denied despite their reasonableness and, even in cases where the requested action is already planned, apparently in order to discourage their use and reinforce the impression that prisoners can do nothing to influence their lot. Any accusation by a staff member is considered true, notwithstanding elaborate reporting, "hearing" and appeal procedures that purportedly protect due process. Written requests may or may not be answered and may be answered wrongly. If established procedures (those in the security classification policy statement, for example) are not consistent with administrative convenience and desires, they are changed—even if that means diminishing their utility. This, too, is designed to enhance prisoners' insecurity, their sense of having no control of anything, uncertainty, and isolation. The courts offer no relief, refusing to become involved in what they term "minutiae" and deferring to the "broad discretion" they accord to prison authorities.

That the Marion policies of maximum restriction have failed in their alleged function is manifest. There has been no decrease in violence in other prisons that can be attributed to Marion, and there is reason to believe the contrary is true. Nor has Marion resulted in the more open operation of the other forty-six federal prisons. Instead, it has acted like an anchor to drag the rest of the system toward its repressive extreme as is illustrated by the proliferation of "mini-control units" and other elements of Marion-style repression. After three years, administrative claims that Marion abuse is having positive results—without any evidence to support the contention—ring very hollow.

The insistence on the efficacy of Marion's demonstrably failed policies of repression in the face of contradictory evidence is indicative of ulterior motives for covering up their failure to achieve the stated goals and continuing their enforcement. The showing of three years reveals the absence of a legitimate penological objective or public interest in the psychological assault and physical harassment of prisoners down to the very salt packets on food trays. Coupled with the evidence of the negative effects of these injurious practices, that absence shows those ulterior motives to hinge on

the use of Marion as a laboratory for experiments in social control and manipulation—even if doing so runs counter to the “mission” of incarceration. Given the obvious cost to prisoners and the fact that some community will pay the price of the stress, anti-social conditioning and debilitation induced at Marion, it is clear that the experimentation is not intended to be in the public interest. The situation also portrays the divergence between that interest and those of the government.

Knowledge of the maximum restriction regimen at Marion seems to be synonymous with condemnation. This summer, the subcommittee of the US Congress charged with overseeing of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) released a 754-page compilation of some of the testimony and material submitted relative to its hearings on Marion. The subcommittee avoided taking a position itself, but the overwhelming majority of the testimony and articles and letters reprinted in the compilation were condemnatory of the lockdown and its continuation. Even the consultants hired by the subcommittee and who admitted on record their bias and that they had recounted only the views presented by BOP officials acknowledged the inappropriateness of the lockdown and that it should end. Other psychological, correctional, legal, and academic “experts” detailed the deleterious effects of Marion not only for prisoners, but for corrections generally, law, and society as well. Their judgement was that the unnecessary repression is damaging, dangerous, and should not continue. Religious, peace, political and other groups wrote letters condemning Marion and calling for progressive change. Private citizens from the US and abroad, including lawyers, educators, activists, medical people, journalists, and members of the clergy, condemned Marion. No one who contributed information except denizens of the BOP endorsed the BOP’s conduct and operation at Marion. Norman Carlson, BOP director, claimed that there were experts outside the BOP to support its position but was unable to produce any to testify or supply statements. The congressional document also exposed at least one other instance of his providing misinformation to the subcommittee.

The destructive repression at USP Marion is of concern to everyone, regardless of how remote the prospect of imprisonment seems to them. It dirties the image of the people in whose name it is perpetrated and wastes their money in a way that can only do them harm. The research and development on how to manipulate and control people against their will being carried out at Marion is something no legitimate government should need and yet has already found application outside of Marion. Increasingly, people are being subjected to Marion for vague reasons that deviate from its alleged purpose of controlling other prisons, reasons that include “protection” or allow people to be sent directly from the streets. Politically active people need be especially wary, given the growing number of political prisoners, litigators, organizers, etc., being sent to Marion and the particu-

lar difficulty they experience in getting transferred out. There is even a Security Level 1 (the lowest) Libyan prisoner at Marion, sent there because of his Libyanness.

These lessons of control will find greater extra-prison application in the future. Congressman Kastenmeier, chair of the subcommittee overseeing the BOP, has linked what is being done at Marion to "fighting terrorism" during testimony before his subcommittee on 26 June 1985. As the recent Socialist Workers Party legal victory against the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) shows, "fighting terrorism" is a shibboleth for action against progressive alternative political activity generally. In the beginning, there was no "control unit," and then it was only one block of Marion. Now it is the whole prison and there are new control units in other prisons. How long will it be before this maximum restriction mania reaches your community? Given the tendency of repressive attitudes to move laterally as well as vertically in state machinery, the attendant practices may reach you to some degree through some aspect of bureaucracy to which you are closer. Or it may reach you through the release of bitter, stressed-out prisoners with no social or job skills.

BOP director Carlson and his henchpeople frequently assert that they are "looking at" and "working on" improvements and "relaxations," but nothing has changed positively in policy or practice in the last eighteen months and very little since 27 October 1983. The overt brutality has diminished, but nothing has happened to prevent its large scale re-emergence. USP Marion Warden Gary Henman recently stated on local TV that "Marion is bad enough without staff going to lengths to make it worse," but restrictions continue to mount as new harassments are instituted and none are repealed. The litigation contesting the brutality and lockdown continues to be slow-walked with US District Court Judge James Foreman sitting on the magistrate's recommendations and refusing to make a ruling. He has been doing so for over a year. Together with his past practice, he is demonstrating his bias and the bankruptcy of asking courts for relief from the actions of their minions. Congress similarly supports the status quo through inaction, revealing another issue on which, like with aid to the Nicaraguan contras, it is out of step with the people. All that is left is for people, ordinary people, to focus on this issue and demand an end to the lockdown and its counterproductive repression. It is up to the people to apply the pressure that will reverse the growth of this metastasizing cancer, not only in defense of prisoners, but in their own as well. Final solutions have historically been started with the use of "concentration models" like Marion and special oppression against small and particularly vilified minorities.

Bill Dunne

Mourning Sickness

marriage vows traditionally
have an emphasis on sharing:
for better, for worse
for richer, for poorer
and good loving couples
believe in sharing the joys
and the sorrows
the pleasure
and the pain

but how am i to share the misery
of your incarceration?
or you, the misery of mine?

i want to understand
your life's routine
how you pass your days
i want to know ...
but i don't want to know too much.

my mind tiptoes carefully to the edge
and i touch on the outer fringe
of your reality
and my stomach rolls over.

if i truly understood, if i really could relate
to how you are forced to live,
day after endless year

i'd puke.

J.E. Telfer

Due Process

So there was this
small celebration in the
prison kitchen afterwards,
with doughnuts and
well-laced coffee and
idle talk of the last
double-noose ceremony.

One of the boys took seventeen minutes
to die. The other,
twenty-three. They fell together
without a sound
though you could see from their eyes
they had been weeping recently.

They say a good hangman
is hard to find;
a good man is even harder.

Hobbled out, prayed over
trussed bagged noosed and dropped

strangulation completes the process
sooner or later.

Susan Musgrave

Indefinite Sentence of Illiteracy: A Cruel and Unusual Punishment

We make our realities with our perceptions. One of my perceptions was that I lived in a literate society and, when I went to prison, I was somewhat surprised that the sector represented in prison was *predominantly* functionally illiterate—defined in terms of a daily tabloid newspaper being a difficult text. And the staff of prisons are only marginally more literate than the prisoner population.

After two-and-a-half years on bail, I had received a five-and-a-half year sentence for conspiracy to traffic LSD. I was thirty-seven-years' old—and a dinosaur. Sure, while I was on bail, I had gotten my first real job since I was nineteen: social work, though I hadn't mentioned my impending court case when I applied for the job. Giving notice was almost worse than being sentenced. When I got to prison, I found I wasn't the only one who had taken literacy for granted. If it hadn't been a given, I doubt that so many of the underclass represented in prison would be illiterate. But that may be wishful thinking. I have been out of prison for over a year now. About six months ago, I got a job coordinating literacy and GED tutoring with an organization called newStart. It's a program staffed by former prisoners who assist others with job-finding and educational upgrading. For prisoners are still coming out of prison as illiterates.

Prison is a place for consistencies; that is one of its pretensions. One of those consistencies was Mick: he had served time in the federal prison before and now he was back. He had also been in the prison University Program before and had continued pursuing his philosophy degree on the street. I had heard talk about how the Program had been five years before, but assumed that those halcyon days were gone for good; the novelty of the Program no longer intrigued prisoners; they were a different breed, younger, doing shorter time. Corrections no longer favoured the idea of university courses for prisoners. All true enough—Mick agreed with my analysis of the malaise—but it failed to satisfy him. Close to graduation, Mick found that the courses offered in the prison did not interest him greatly. He began to think.

One substantial difference between education in this prison when I was there and five years before was that all education had been previously under one umbrella. Now, while some of the University Program students still served as GED tutors, they had to move to another part of the prison to do that tutoring. GED students worked in the vocational area under a supervisor who had come from the local community college. Prisoners who were not up to a junior-high level of academic competency got short

shrift, despite the fact that “literacy” had become a government and then a Corrections’ buzzword. (In government institutions, folks talk about the heat and smoke for a long time before they begin to move to the fire exits.)

There is really no question about whether large numbers of prisoners have literacy problems; they do—and Mick knew it. He also decided he could find the fire exits without the blindman’s help. Only trouble is, at least in prison, often a prisoner is prevented from doing anything at all. Even when what is proposed can be seen as not a bad thing, it must be a Corrections’ thing before action is allowed. Furthermore, the danger exists that prisoners generating a program to tutor other prisoners might be co-opted by the Corrections’ structures; case managers, living-unit officers and all other manner of unqualified Corrections’ social workers might try to make literacy a condition of parole. Worse yet, Corrections might demand progress reports from prisoner-tutors. Mick and I were left with the usual solution to conflict with Corrections: keep it secret.

And we did keep it more or less secret for the first few weeks. Then we got the assistance of those in positions of power whom we could trust—the University Program Coordinator, Dr Jacquelyn Nelson, was immensely helpful and enthusiastic. The supervisor of the GED program advised us of those he estimated needed literacy tutoring. Hendrik Hoekema brought us materials from Frontier College, as well as the Beautiful Woman who gave us a seminar on literacy tutoring; we had been a little short of prisoner-volunteers to do tutoring up until then, but they came in huge numbers that day.

That the prisoners were reluctant at first could be expected: prisoners are usually conservative; change in prison is almost always for the worst, at least that is the prisoner’s perception. There had been a small but incredibly dedicated core at first; and they stayed, some of them even taking the skills they had acquired to other prisons when they were transferred, employing those skills in the new prison.

Mick tutored hard, working with Don, a man who had some substantial obstacles to learning. From a car crash when he was a child, Don had sustained what I can only imagine were brain injuries with lasting effects. He had been institutionalized from that time to his age of majority. After that, illiterate and socially maladapted, he had been incarcerated sporadically throughout his adult life; he was in his early thirties when we encountered him in prison. He was more or less convinced that he was impaired enough to be uneducable. After Mick worked with him for a while, it was apparent that this was not true, but equally apparent was the fact that he had spent most of his life in institutions without anyone ever attempting to educate him. He had come to believe what the institutional personnel had told him: that he was uneducable. In a few short months, Mick had him reading and writing, albeit rudimentarily—something a lifetime of institutions had failed to do.

Another fact that impressed me about ABLE (Adult Basic Literacy Education), the acronym we bestowed upon our nascent enterprise, was its power for personal transformations amongst the tutors themselves. Ron, a thirty-five-year-old, doing life terms for double murder, had fifteen years invested in the prison system; he had always talked like a confirmed racist and so I was somewhat surprised at the protective and proud attitude he assumed toward the man he was tutoring, an East Indian. I even found myself somewhat circumspect in front of those I tutored, restraining the poisonous vitriol I found so natural to wield against my oppressors; no point in stirring to action those who will only hurt themselves by action. Generally, we acted quite responsibly towards our duties as tutors; we held regular weekly meetings to evaluate our enterprise and to learn technique from our combined experiences. One of the guiding lights of ABLE was a two-time loser who had been hostile towards the incipient program during his previous term—it had cut into his library-located gambling; he was now both enthusiastic student and teacher.

Things happen. You imagine that the world is somehow consistent with what you know about yourself, a personal perception. You make a decision at nineteen and at thirty-seven you go to prison and, like they say, prison is a sorrowful place and it just doesn't work. Rationales, except in the case of clear and present danger or in the case of retribution, simply do not hold for incarceration; they are logically and experientially inconsistent. But the prison system will stay, if only because we love the spectacle of the punishment of the wicked; it might as well address some substantive exigencies while it remains in place.

John Wilcox

Education or Indoctrination?

We are of two minds regarding the present literacy policy of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). While we are staunch supporters of education, we are highly suspicious of the CSC's sudden and intensely powerful interest in literacy. Some prison educators have attempted to assuage our doubts, arguing that rehabilitation—the buzzword of the 60s—has once again regained popularity within the CSC. The Solicitor General, James Kelleher, is on record as stating that “in the area of corrections, my greatest priority is to provide increased opportunities for convicted offenders to become productive and law-abiding citizens.” Sounds good, but unfortunately rhetoric doesn't necessarily translate into action nor put food on the table—an unpleasant fact that an estimated 2.8 million Canadians living below the poverty line can attest to. Indeed, the government's concern might ring more true if Brian and Mila had a few less shoes or old-age pensioners a few more bucks.

We are genuinely concerned with the CSC's newly adopted literacy policy. Kelleher might be correct when he states that “those who are illiterate will have fewer opportunities, fewer choices and much greater difficulty changing their lives than those who are literate.” But his comments raise a fundamental question that we're not convinced the CSC has adequately researched: What is literacy?

Literacy is not, as many contend, simply the 2 Rs (reading and writing). It is not a set of specific, concrete operations that can be taught by rote or learned by interfacing with a computer. Neither is it absolutely nor quantifiably tangible, subject to government curricula, testing and grading. To view human beings in purely scientific terms only serves to transform them into thing-like beings which no longer behave according to human nature but rather conform to the curricula that has transformed them; it becomes almost impossible to imagine what human potential exists separate from this transformed nature.

And yet we wonder how many educators pedantically continue to employ versions of Thomas Gradgrind's concrete operationalist credo:

Now what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir! (Dickens, *Hard Times*)

Even more seemingly libertarian views of literacy tend to oppress. Unfortunately, most existing definitions not only condone and justify oppression, they *anticipate* it, potentially sentencing men and women to a mere existence of oppression and domestication rather than liberating them to an actualized life of freedom. According to Denis Goulet, “the mark of a

successful educator is not skill in persuasion—which is an insidious form of propaganda—but the ability to dialogue with educatees in a mode of reciprocity.” To impose one’s values *absolutely* upon another often entails negating the other’s culture and as such is both dangerous and repressive.

For this reason we are strongly opposed to the coercive thrust of the CSC’s Literacy Program. One cannot become enlightened through threats and intimidation. Taken to its extreme position, a gun butt may produce the desired response, but it does so out of fear and fosters resentment and rebelliousness—the very attitudes the Solicitor General is attempting to discourage! Unless one subscribes to a Wild West mentality—the Clint Eastwood “make my day” school of critical thinking—it seems obvious to us that indoctrination neither promotes free-thinking nor liberates the individual. One cannot be liberated from a coercive and authoritarian educational worldview by a coercive and authoritarian educational model.

What the CSC seems unable to recognize is that literacy is not an end in itself, but rather it is the means to an end which we believe is the liberation of both the individual and society. In the words of Paolo Freire, “[T]o be literate is not to have arrived at some pre-determined destination, but to utilize reading, writing and speaking skills so that our understanding of the world is progressively enlarged.” Empowerment implies an ability to divine some sense of truth, some *raison d’être*, to probe the deeper philosophical questions confronting life and to possess media literacy, legal literacy, economic literacy, political literacy, cultural/historical literacy, spiritual/philosophical literacy, emotional/psychological literacy, and educational literacy. Quite simply, to be literate is to possess far more than the mechanics of a Grade 9 education.

This is not to discount the merits of a Grade 9 education *per se*. But to suggest that it provides a functional level is a lie. It does not guarantee that someone will have greater opportunities, greater choices or less difficulty staying out of prison. How many jobs are available for individuals with less than Grade 12, particularly ex-cons with little or no job experience? Although designated “functionally” literate, the prisoner often possesses illusory abilities and a false sense of empowerment. It seems quite apparent that these individuals are condemned to an overwhelming reliance on others’ perceptions. They fall prey to the superficial, unenlightened and often manipulated perceptions of the CSC and the mass media; perceptions aimed at perpetuating the status quo. For the most part, these “functional literates” are unable to combat the subtly sophisticated and insidiously subliminal images which constantly bombard our senses. The quality of the functional literate’s life is improved insignificantly and he remains illiterate in most areas of life.

Naively, many contend that education is a part of the solution when it is, most often, part of the problem. According to Jack London and Milton R. Stern:

[the belief that] education serves to democratize society and make opportunities for getting ... ahead available to all people ... is more often wish than fulfillment.... Education is more concerned with the preservation of the status quo of economics and politics than with helping to provide equal opportunities for all.

While the liberation of the individual and society are very much interrelated, a society in fetters, which promulgates and perhaps even implements pseudo-libertarian views of functional literacy, cannot *not* oppress. In essence, the Solicitor General's rhetoric, while quite possibly well-intentioned, is misguided and ill-informed. At the foundation of our nation's and our prison's illiteracy is a system which has, in essence, been designed to guarantee the freedoms of the few to tyrannize the many. The CSC naively chooses to treat the effect rather than the cause of illiteracy. This is analogous to pruning a tree while neglecting to remedy a terminal case of root rot. Until the inherent inequalities within capitalism are addressed—is capitalism not essentially predicated upon the literacy of a few and the illiteracy of the rest?—any attempt to alleviate illiteracy in a substantive fashion is a farce.

Underlying our philosophy is both the belief that all persons are inherently *equal* and the insistence that they *equally deserve* to be free. All persons should have the *equal* opportunity to realize their potential, to self-actualize, as long as it does not infringe or impose upon the freedom of others. It is unfortunate that the CSC does not aspire to enlighten or allow prisoners the freedom to make sense of the world for themselves in their functional literacy programs. Instead they desire to indoctrinate prisoners in a condescending and patronizing manner that not only insults prisoners but serves to reinforce class stratification. The coercive tactics of the CSC, which can be paraphrased as "No read, no release," are particularly obscene. Once again, the CSC is abusing its power, exacerbating the overwhelming powerlessness of prisoners and narrowing prisoners' freedom to choose.

It is our sincere hope that in time our politicians, administrators and educators, indeed society as a whole, will realize that, contrary to Christian myth, we are not our brothers' keepers, but rather we are our brothers' liberators; literacy is the catalyst for liberation, both for the self and the other. One's freedom is inextricably tied to literacy; one cannot truly be free if one's brother or sister is in chains.

Les Merson & Leo Compain

lajo

that same intransigent spirit
 which hounded the turks out of skopje
 and swept the fascists from belgrade
 sticks to your forehead
 like a thief's brand

that selfsame honour
 has been squandered
 in countless skid row bars

that mountain charm
 lavished on somnolent hookers
 spilled over wasted wives

its price
 a lattice of blade scars
 lacing your face

that broken choppy English
 a winner in café society
 ringing before you
 like a leper's bell

and at the heart of it all
 the realization that cash is esteem here
 and honour for fools
 settling in the core of your gut
 like a spike

and now convicted
 having struggled and failed
 you call on the last of your spirit
 to carry you through

behind these fences
 lie strange mountains
 lajo

but no stranger than the mountains outside

David Emmonds

guard tower

coils of shining razor wire
shimmer around me
festive

chain link fencing
makes me dizzy
as it kaleidoscopes in hazing heat

sun beats through
the bulletproof shield of my post
in stultifying waves

the radio crackles
with inane messages
and makework

sector nine
scan those inmates
are they really playing softball

my own radio plays country songs
and eagles spill
over the mountains at my back

painful glints of sun
stab off truck roofs
baking in the carpark

i strain my ears
for the first dull sound
of our relief shift

wending through the mountain pass
an hour early as usual
bright as new-made pins

David Emmonds

prison exercise yard (summer)

the sharks are out tonight
nervous shoal fish dart
parrotfish chatter
gnawing at each other's fins

the whole reef is steaming
under a hunter's moon

crabs hide
and oblivious staghorn
trembles in mysterious currents

huge untouchable groupers
silently fin
dreaming

morays
eyes turned up
slither from crevices
teeth ready
and meat on their minds

barracuda patrol
waiting for the first flash
of scattered scales
or a faint scent of secret blood

David Emmonds

Out of touch

There was an awful lot of blood
That morning when I went
To get him up
On the floor, smeared
On the sink, the sheets
The rubber bands
He'd borrowed from me
The night before
On some ridiculous pretext
To re-attach a handle
On a coffee cup or something

Saturday morning
We are all going
To the Gospelfest out
In the chapel, out on its lawn
Rumour said he was okay
It was the second time
Since I've known him
That he'd cut himself
And as I came around the chapel porch
There were two beautiful dogs
Sitting on the grass
A blind couple had brought their guides
For us to see
And touch
And to stroke their golden fur
There was ice cream in abundance
And steak, and dozens
And dozens of outside visitors
I encouraged the big contented
Lab to lick the strawberry
Flavour off my hands
And up my forearm
And I had the scent of dog
On me again
Should I ever wash it off?

They called us in for
 Lunch and sermons
 Sung by electric Christians
 Wired to the stage above the altar
 Live
 A happy song
 And then a parable about a kid
 Trapped in the lift bridge gears
 His dad's the operator
 And so an understanding son is squashed
 To save a passing train
 And another happy song
 Some sort of message there
 Then the chaplain
 Took a few of us aside, assuring
 Your friend's okay but lost a lot
 And took a lot of blood and stitches
 A message, but my thoughts were elsewhere
 I remembered how
 One time the two of us were spared
 A certain bust for boozing
 When a guy got murdered in the joint
 We were locked down in our cells
 For the investigation
 And couldn't try to stagger
 To the movie
 In the gym
 Past the guards
 With our cans of brew
 Lucky
 Instead, I lay there in my parka
 (the one with all the pockets)
 On my bed, seeing triple
 Until I realized
 Just how lucky

To be paying our individual
Debts to society
Too bad about some
Too bad
You people take your parables so literally
And yet, without so much
As execution
Manage to insure a sacrifice is made

And the film we missed was "Mr. Mom"
And perhaps I'll send some skin books
In to the hospital for my friend to use
I left the Gospelfest
Right after lunch
But first I had to see the dogs again
And would have kissed
The cow-eyed Lab
Upon her furry forehead
But for all the witnesses
I shook a gentle paw
And hoped they'd come again next year

So like our innocence
They did not

John Rives

High Anxiety

The afternoon had gone by surprisingly fast. In fact, too fast and it was almost time for the afternoon count. Joe felt the usual twinges of anxiety that accompanied the approach of evening—this happened every day at this time. Nothing appeared to erase it, not even the Valium that the doctor had prescribed; it only made him sleepy and more irritable. Maybe he should just spend the evening in his cell, reading the History assignment for tomorrow or working on the overdue English essay? Joe knew that he wouldn't, though, because the TV had him hooked—there was nothing that he could do about it. There appeared to be no way out of this situation.

Thinking ahead, he knew exactly what would happen. It would be the same as every other night with the usual great selection of offered programs and the others voting against his choice. Shit. All the action and suspense on the tube and the other guys would want to watch "Happy Days," "Mash," "Three's Company," or "National Geographic." Why the other night they had watched some foolish part of the series about how the Society had sponsored the moving of a bunch of old monuments to higher ground to escape the rising river—the Nile, or some other river no one ever heard of. He just couldn't understand the interest. Christ, he had spent all morning in school and that should be enough education.

Joe thought about the article he had recently read in *TV Guide* that outlined all the upcoming weekly shows. There was one that really interested him. It was called "Police Child" and was about a teenager who looked younger than his age. He is employed by the Police Department as an agent and his assignment is to mix with the kids at school and uncover drug use. The boy mixes with the others who are smoking grass and this gets him closer to the suppliers. The description of the program really interested Joe, but he knew that the others would never go for it. It was totally strange how they all disliked his choice of law enforcement programs ... really weird.

The loudspeaker announcing "five minutes to count" brought his thoughts back to the moment and he moved to the cell door to be counted. The bastards will likely screw up the count again ... they should take their shoes off and then they'd be able to count to twenty. The supposed humour of his joke didn't improve Joe's mood, so he prepared to stand there for a while.

Today, however, Joe was wrong; they made it the first try. He stretched out on his bunk and waited for the end doors to be opened for the supper line. His mind began to drift again and he fantasized about what it would

be like in one more year He would be back home ... could watch what he liked on TV. He began to think of his wife and his son. Suddenly, a new fear took over. At the weekly visits, lately, his wife had constantly been mentioning that the boy was starting to become interested in television. He liked some of the children's shows, "Like 'Captain Kangaroo' and 'Sesame Street,'" she had stated. "Shit!" he snapped. "That's all I need ... having to play second-fiddle to some brat after all these years." The door at the end of the range opened and Joe ran to the dining room.

He rushed through his meal ... even missing the pie and hurried back to the cell block. If he could reach the TV room before the others, he could turn on "Dragnet." Once on, the others would seldom change the channel—they were quite fair that way—except for "S.W.A.T."; they'd always change that. Too bad the bastards wouldn't show a little class sometimes. "All in the Family"—what garbage.

Joe's excitement was at full pitch as Sergeant Friday wrestled the pistol from the robber's hand and, with a flip of the wrist, slapped on the cuffs. The show was almost over and this caused Joe to fidget. Would he have the chance to switch the channel and put on "Adam-12" before the other guys arrived? For sure, they'd want to watch the News. If they would just hold off until the Lux Soap commercial was over, he would make it. He'd have his new program on. The suspense was making Joe nervous and causing him to check constantly the TV room door. He was so nervous that he missed the end of "Dragnet" where they tell what happened to the criminal in court. He mentally cursed the others for causing this to happen and wondered if they were aware of the problems they created for him. Probably not, he reasoned, wouldn't give a shit anyway. He just couldn't understand how some people could be so self-centred ... no consideration ... no class. He was almost convinced that there was a conspiracy against him.

His anger was interrupted when George, the prisoner in the cell next to his, entered the room and asked for the *TV Guide*. Joe reluctantly pulled it from his hip pocket and threw it toward him.

"What's on the old tube tonight, Josie?" he asked, searching for the correct page. "Hope that there's not too many cop shows, because there's a really good program on. You'll like it, Josie ... the 'Lawrence Welk Show' ... real tootie frootie ... just like you."

Joe glanced at George. "Damn right," he shouted. "A fucking conspiracy."

Bill Mackey

The Window

Each day she stood for hours in front of the window. It was rectangular, double-plated, fashioned from a material that was guaranteed “break-proof.” After many years, there wasn’t a square inch left that hadn’t been defiled with names and pierced hearts, frantic “Gotta get stoned” and frustrated wiggles flowering over all the other inscriptions.

Her cell was unremarkable. The walls were cement bricks painted white; the ceiling was punched through with barely perceptible holes and painted black. An intercom was fixed in the ceiling; its use was limited to the counsellors’ voices calling out reprimands or announcing mealtimes. A mesh slot had been cut into the door, allowing the counsellors to shine flashlights inside at fifteen-minute intervals from lights-out until morning, checking that their captives hadn’t strangled themselves with their itchy woolen blankets. Beside a mattress covered in bile-green plastic, a stool and slab huddled unused—they had originally been intended as a desk, but writing materials were forbidden in the cells. A metal sink and toilet squatted in the opposite corner, minus towels and toilet paper. Sometimes she would examine her face in the steel plate above the sink or, clambering onto the stool, her legs. But the plate was dull and obscure.

So she stood at the window, tracing its wounded surface with one finger. Sometimes she leaned against it and cried; it helped pass the cell time. She wondered where the other kids who had been locked inside this cage had gone. To other detention centres and jails? Back home, back to school? It was a strangely intimate experience, caressing their names and messages with her fingertips; she felt as if she knew each one personally. Her own detention hearing had fixed her release date at two weeks from now, but inside the cell there was nothing to mark the passing time.

The window overlooked a parking lot which boasted little activity. It was occupied by police cars and sheriff vans which remained immobile if she watched them, but, like a clock’s minute hand, would sneak away the instant she turned aside. On lucky days she would catch sight of a policeman walking by, swinging a brown lunch bag. At night blackness unhinged itself from the sky and clattered down, blotting everything out except the street lamp at the other side of the road. Its silver light washed through the window and onto the floor of the cell. She liked to imagine that it was the glow of the moon.

One day she discovered a spiderweb outside the window, on the bottom right-hand corner. It was in tatters, shuddering at the slightest breath of wind. Once it would have disgusted her, but now she pressed her face

against the resisting glass, intent on closer scrutiny. The owner lay shrivelled up on the windowsill, eight legs curled inwards and beginning to crumble. While she stared, her fingernails moved against the window, scratching out a tune for her dead friend.

Evelyn Lau
Age 15

Two Poems

After violently discarding
Another letter of rejection
I slit my wrist like an envelope

A dog's bark disturbs the stars
While a man lies, chainsmoking,
In a single bed

Les Merson

My Keeper

Soft features.
A concealed weapon
beneath her uniform.
Like a bottle of Johnny Walker Red
to a drunk,
I am gagged
by desire,
bile backing up
and bulging in my throat,
a clogged drain.

A naive schoolboy,
I am confused
by contradictions.

Yet,
neither she
nor I
can escape
her.

I long to hold her,
to clasp her trigger-happy hand.
I want to pound and pummel her.

Like a bored cashier
gazing upon an endless lineup,
she stares past me.
Chastised,
I slink away,
a delinquent mongrel,
and crap under her bed.

Les Merson

Writer-in-Residence

In the old days I used to make book. I had prestige—and fun. Writing out the betting slips, chasing down the odds, hiding it all from the guards. But *write* a book? Fourteen years as a cellblock gangster and it all goes down the tubes. The only respect I get now is from a skinny embezzler who spends all his time in the Russian novelist section of the library. Just the sort of ally I need when I'm trying to convince four young turks not to "borrow" my television for the night.

My first taste of literary success came at mail-call. A letter from the editor of a small magazine congratulating me on winning their poetry prize. A cheque for sixty dollars was enclosed. Sixty dollars! For my vision! My light! The reward seemed downright criminal—on the other hand, sixty beans would keep me in Cheetos and Dr Peppers for a month.

To add insult to poet's wages, the editor had put in a p.s. "As a fellow writer I envy you the peace and solitude in which to pursue your chosen craft."

Peace? Solitude? Didn't this guy know that when you close a cell door the flies can still get in? Maybe he thinks those convicts hanging over the range are talking in sign language. Give me a break! Writing in prison is like trying to juggle chainsaws during Chinese rush hour.

For every hundred guys making noises, there's at least another hundred that think I'm their private writer-in-residence. Every cell has a story; every prisoner has a letter begging to be written. It gets busy. I must be the only convict in the world doing twenty-one years who doesn't have enough time.

I had to be fair so I began listing the requests in order of urgency. If a guy was over six feet and could deadlift four hundred pounds it was urgent. If he was under a hundred and forty pounds I wouldn't write him a suicide note.

Meat, for instance, my latest cell partner, asked me to pen a love poem for his girl. "You know, full of passion and stuff, like Harold Robbins." Meat keeps a knife in his sock and his brains wrapped in a bandana. I wrote:

Dear Mona,
Roses are dead
Violets are doomed
As will be you
If you don't visit soon.

Meat liked it, but wanted to add “and bring lots of drugs.” Instead of a discussion on iambic pentameters and the poetic interruption of the fifth line, I reminded him he’d “only just met the broad once,” and that he shouldn’t be so forward.

Between winning sixty dollar poetry contests and wooing Mona, I managed to type out the two favourite words of any novelist—THE END. I rushed right down to the mailroom where it cost me a month’s wages to double certify and triple register my Pulitzer Prize-winning blockbuster to a top New York Agency. Two months later I got the manuscript back with a note: “Great story—wrong decade. Sorry.” Anti-heroes were unfashionable in the 80s. The market for bad guys was down.

It took a further two months and half-a-dozen more rejections before I signed on with a bottom New York Agency. Her office was a Volkswagen camper up on blocks. I had to write back in care of a license plate in Newark.

Still, she was a New York agent—well, a New Jersey agent, but close enough. It wouldn’t be long before I was being fêted at one of those literary parties. Moguls would line up to buy my soul. Women would ask to touch my scars.

My Jersey agent got me a contract. The advance was six figures if you overlooked the decimal. With her end, she bought wheels for her camper and moved to New York. We were on a roll.

I was assigned an editor. Her first letter was like a dentist’s promise. She stroked me for three pages and wound up by saying, “There’s some work to be done, it won’t hurt a bit.”

It hurt a lot. Near the end I wrote to her wondering if anyone else in the world spent two hours splaying their brains over whether to replace the word “and” with a comma. She wrote back saying, “Writing is war.” I had been at war all my life, I had hoped writing would be different.

Finally when we had all of my participles de-dangled and infinitives unsplit, the lawyers moved in. They slashed and burned anything that resembled libel, truth, or an interesting sentence. The smoking remains were typeset into galleys. But when my publisher told me how many copies they were releasing, I said there were Italian wedding invitations that had bigger print runs.

I got an invitation to my own launch, and couldn’t go. My story was between covers but I was still behind bars. The parole board, instead of tripping over themselves to cut loose this literary lion, said I lacked insight. There were higher ideals at stake, they told me. I left the hearing with another year to think of some.

Meat was waiting in the hall. His lip hung when he learned I didn’t make my ticket. But his mood brightened at mail-call; he got a postcard from Mona. She was threatening to visit. To impress her he went out to get a new tattoo.

I used the time to jot down a few ideas for a new book, which I'd begin as soon as the warden returned my typewriter. He had all the typewriters arrested last week after some serial killer had used one to start a fraudulent chain letter.

At lockdown, Meat flexed his bicep so I could read his new tack—BORN TO LOOSE—as I lay there wondering how to do another year. Hell, I could do it in a shoebox—it was enough time to get a first draft of a second novel. Of course it might take a bit longer writing with a seagull feather and transmission fluid, if the warden didn't give back the typewriters.

BÖRN TO LOOSE? Sometimes it just works out that way.

I think I'll call my new book *The Meaning of My Life*—unless I can find a better title.

Stephen Reid

Irreverences

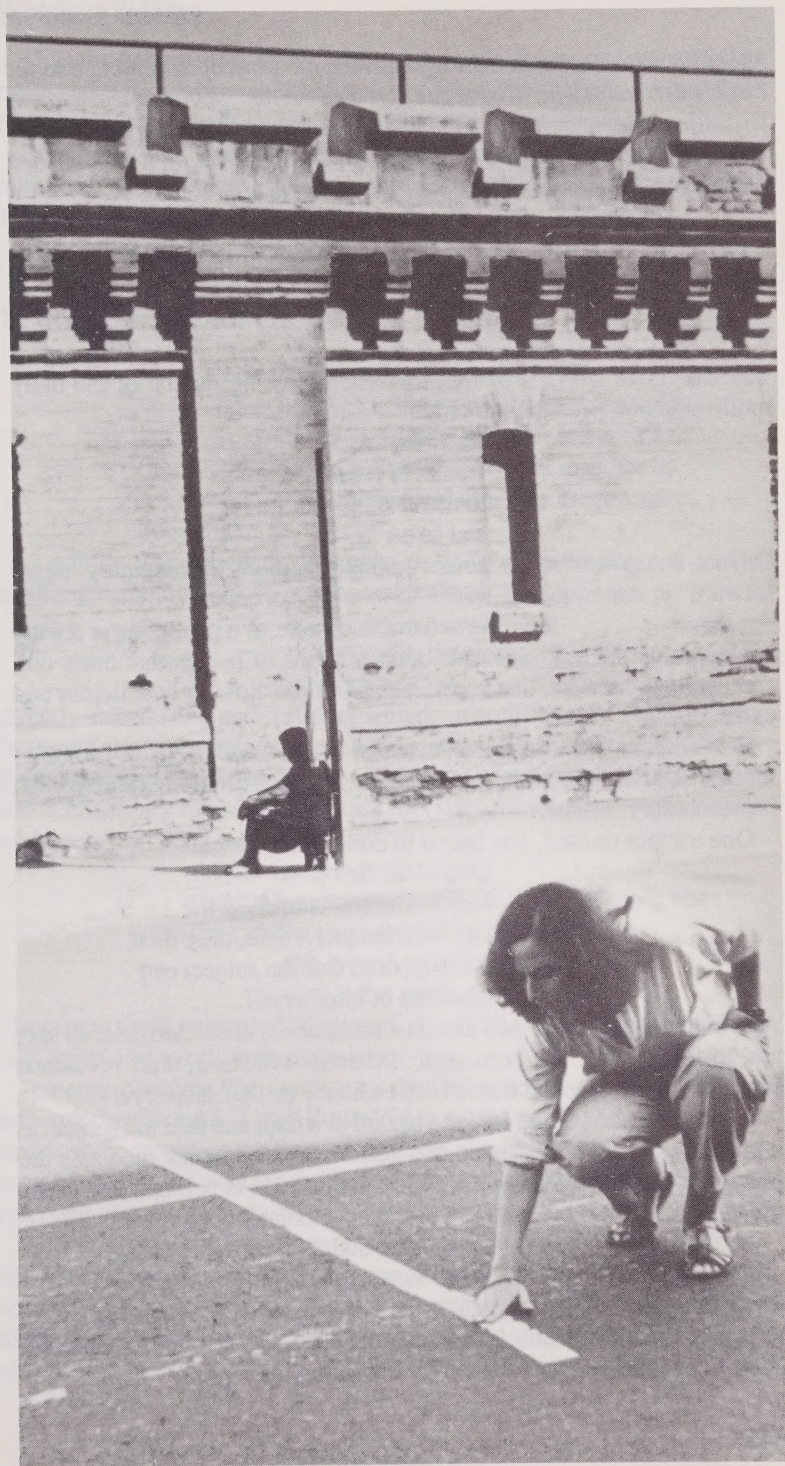
Democracy in Chile came to a violent end in 1973 when the military, led by General Augusto Pinochet and generously backed by US military and corporate interests, staged a coup d'état. President Salvador Allende and countless others were murdered, mass detentions and torture took place, the Constitution was suspended, and martial law was imposed. Thus was initiated the Pinochet dictatorship which continues to dominate Chile to this day.

In 1979, the Collective for Art Actions (CADA) was formed in Santiago, Chile, when an interdisciplinary group of artists and intellectuals decided that new forms of expression had to be found to counteract the appropriation of signs by the Chilean dictatorship. Working at the margins of Chilean society, this group has attempted to infiltrate and subvert the web of meanings which determines the social landscape.

CADA has, from the start, emphasized a de-institutionalization of art forms, taking art out from the confines of the gallery, and on to the streets of Santiago. "Art actions" have varied from "Not to Die of Hunger in Art" (1980), which used milk to portray deficiency and lack in Chile, to the design and introduction of the slogan "NO+" onto city walls. This slogan, which means "no more," encourages the participation of the passerby to fill in the missing elements (i.e., no more hunger, no more torture).

Lotty Rosenfeld and Diamela Eltit, two of the founders of CADA, spent a month in Vancouver this fall as visiting artists in residence at Women in Focus, Video In and the Western Front. Their program, entitled "Woman, Art and the Periphery," consisted of an exhibition of multi-media art by Chilean women, as well as public lectures, screenings of contemporary Chilean videos and a video installation by Lotty Rosenfeld, called "This Line is My Weapon."

In "Irreverences" ("Desacatos"), Diamela Eltit describes the work of Lotty Rosenfeld, whose art actions have been primarily focused on the transit signs and codes which guide the circulation within the city. Like the circulation of money in society, the circulation of people in the city is largely unconscious and ordered. Rosenfeld intervenes the traffic dividing line by painting or taping a horizontal line through it. The disruption of this code is more than a violation of the geography of urban transportation, but a form a disobedience to the grammar of order imposed by the military dic-



tatorship. Eltit draws an analogy between the work of Rosenfeld and the traffic barricades which are regularly raised in the "poblaciones" (squatter settlements) of Santiago to impede the entrance of military and police vehicles. Eltit, a Guggenheim award winner in literature, has published two novels, Lumperica (1983) and Por la Patria (1986).

Michael Hoechsmann

The individual act of crossing, traversing, passing, is one of the daily routines which structure our lives:

to cross streets
that is, to cross vacant lots
to traverse the multitudes
and so on

On foot, and in movement, we carry along, reiterating an imaginary "strive forward" in our sustained human form of displacement.

If we viewed this as a stage, as a panorama or a wide angle, we would see thousands upon millions of beings that cross one another, that intersect, that sometimes block the view, only to detour and to disappear.

We would thus see, and be seen, when we had not seen but the crossing, that we had not seen at all, so accustomed as we are to things and to what is presumably strange.

One teaches oneself, one learns to dodge the obstacle.

One of the first civic
responsibilities is to cross the
city with integrity; then, only then,
is it supposed that the subject can
take care of him/herself.

And this lesson implies two almost simultaneous characteristics: to see, and to forget what has been seen; to barely withstand, with reverence imposed on the eye, and trained in obedience by that same eye.

It is common to see the city as a hazard or a trap, and thus the subject as a possible victim, catastrophic in a sort of amnesia which mediates the perception of non-verbal signs: to break this code is perhaps one of the greatest misdemeanors, and can be costly and damaging to one's life.

There is no dialogue with these signs.

These signs are not up for discussion.

They are spoken of on a vertical plane, reproduced by the functionaries of the code, who are themselves transformed by the visible and temporal authority of their power, apparently becoming intemporal.

Thus the transit code, that is, the code of open spaces, is so opposed to other codes which become identical: any breakdown of private or public disposition encloses in its seed either penalty or punishment.

Formed by the "common sense," we let slide the interrogation of the arbitrariness of a mere convention for reasons of mental or physical health. The question disappears, habit reigns, and the body submits.

The propaganda of the code inhibits us.

1. Between Avant Garde and Society

Perhaps the best example I have for these notions is the repressed Chile of today, brutally suffocated under the norms of the last constitution, held together by an apparent and arbitrary consensus.

It opposes:

the growing irreverence in the "poblaciones":

a polar tension open like a fissure and resistance

barricades

lit candles in the streets

power black outs

directly intersecting and colliding with the institutionality that rules us. In these forms of uprising there is a systematic reiteration which makes them recognizable in another non-verbal understanding: the barricade, I insist, is not only an obstacle to transit, but also an interrogation of a system of power:

the barricade is anonymous

the candles demarcate the mourning of those alive

the candles mark the fall of the combatant

the loss of an innocent

and of the spirit.

These new signs, generated in the creativity of the precarious, surround the city limits and overflow it, accusingly.

It seems to me that this situation can be analogized and transposed to the art work developed by Lotty Rosenfeld in recent years, and that her footsteps can be traced in the light of these events. This is not an immediate transfer, but in the manner in which a proposition becomes praxis, I am referring of course, to one of the possible praxes.

And this possibility permits, in this case, the elaboration of a theory between art and society, and, more specifically, between avant garde and society, which understands the work of art as an advance, that validates itself and becomes doubly efficient in its coherence to other social mechanisms.

To intervene a transit sign
 +
 the barricade
 +
 the candles
 the insurrection of the code
 by dangerous, simple, popular actions.

I must admit, however, that it would be reductive to read the plural work of Lotty Rosenfeld in this singular relation, or to exhaust it as simply a resistance to the Chilean dictatorship, though it does portray it as such in the signs which constitute it. Thus, although it strongly alludes to the contingency with which it confronts and encounters an analog—the barricade, for example—it transcends it, projecting forward and backward therefrom. Backwards to the foundational signs imposed by the inhuman colonization and foundation of the city; forwards, crossing borders and projecting itself onto a threatened continent, recolonized in a modern form of barbarity; where Nicaragua is threatened, where El Salvador is repressed, where other countries suffer under the marks of the second intervention, the punishment inflicted upon them.

2. And Art

Another problem which is established upsets the specific medium from which this work emanates: the visual arts.

Here the tradition of painting appears routine and degraded in the lines painted on the street. Paint and adhesive tape is used to cross the line, while the manual labour of the artist forms a new visual which departs from the frame.

The departure from the frame is the departure from the wall that contains it. Flush with the earth, without a ceiling or a door, an extension which posits a contradiction, to say the least, with other art forms. In contradiction, it interrogates

the painting
 the gallery
 the museum

which, for a moment, are petrified in their inert institutionality.

This artist, one of the inaugurators of art actions in Chile, along with the CADA group, is indicative of a new visuality which is regained through the cracks that the system is incapable of consuming or repressing; something like a thought I have on my mind, when my mouth says yes, but my head, all my energy, says no, no.

Until the paralysis is broken down, the element is searched out by which the crack expands, becomes autonomous and reaches out; meanwhile, two, three, even six years pass for the one who watches, vigilizing step by step, moving along in the certainty of improvement, the most auspicious stage.

Diamela Eltit

Translated from the Spanish

A Pedagogy for the Repressed? The Politics of Prison Education

The major drug dealer, the stock fraud, the murderer, the bank robber and the smuggler have one thing in common. They were caught breaking the law and sent to prison. As prisoners they have become redefined and categorized by various theories that see them as having behavioural problems, moral inadequacies, psychological problems or social problems. All of their problems are defined in terms of pathologies that can be cured by the intervention of well-meaning practitioners employing the latest paradigm. It is an interventionist approach that sees the object of its intervention as being dependent and passive—a vessel to be filled with the proper fluid for societal adaptation (as well as being emptied of the flawed fluid). The paradigm in vogue is a mechanistic/authoritarian outgrowth of moral/cognitive development through education. This article is a critique of that paradigm. It will argue that the paradigm is not new and is as flawed theoretically and logically as were the previous paradigms used in “corrections.” Further, I will argue that the approach to “corrections” by current institutions gives only lip service to “correction” and instead focuses on “control,” thus rendering any paradigm useless. Institutions of “corrections” use the latest paradigm (as they have previous paradigms) to legitimate control.

Any effective new paradigm dealing with prisoners and “correction” must start by placing the prisoner where he belongs—in society. This means that the prisoner must be dealt with as an equal—which he is—who has broken the law. The approach must be one of politicization, that is, the empowerment of the prisoner. It is still a partial result of education but not solely. It means seeing the prisoner in his environment (the prison) as well as in society. The prison creates as well as controls. The prisoner is an active participant (though a subordinate one) in this environment.

One of the main problems with educational programming in prison has to be with certain assumptions that premise the structure of programs. “Reason” is put forth as the object of the exercise. If we can teach prisoners to “reason” then we can help develop them into law-abiding citizens. On one level this seems like common sense, but when one strips away the padding and sees what is meant by “reason,” then common sense begins to border on nonsense. This is especially true when one includes the environment of the prison as a place where “reason” is to be learned. Reason, as it is used in programs and paradigms, is actually “rationality.”

Rationality merely means a "systematic arrangement," usually a systematic arrangement that structures thought and action. In other words, "reason" is specific, structured, measured, and evaluated. Historically, this "reason" has its philosophical base in positivism.

Positivism encompasses the validation of cognitive thought by experience of facts structured on the physical sciences as a model of certainty. Knowledge is reduced to that which can be scientifically measured and is denuded of any political, philosophical and social context. Facts becomes separated from values, objectivity undermines critique and the notion that "essence" and "appearance" might not coincide is lost in this view of the world. It does, however, create the rationality useful to a world run by technicians, managers and bureaucrats. This "worldview" is the worldview of the prison and prison programming. It is also the world into which other programs and paradigms must fit when dealing with the prison setting.

General approaches to education in prison fall into two main categories. First, *the wishful thinking approach* in which the individual is reduced to the discourse of psychological categories. Here the approach moves towards variations of such concepts as "self-fulfillment" or "self-actualization." The individual is reduced to an isolated societal atom that needs to "become" something other than a problem, in this case a prisoner. The wider social context is lost, as is the dehumanizing, de-individualizing context of the prison. This has become the worst of liberal programming—based as it is on an assumption that perpetuates the problem rather than deals with it. There is no room for recognition in this approach that wider social and economic forces feed into what can loosely be referred to as social disintegration, nor that the specific environment of the prison feeds into social and personal disintegration.

Second, *the cognitive and moral development models*, and their outgrowths, in which the individual is seen as struggling with the "natural world" or at least interacting with the natural world. The idea that the individual exists in a world made up of classes and groupings exercising differential power is lost in these approaches. Here the individual can solve his "problem" by "cognitive" development or "moral" development. It is an "Alice in Wonderland" approach when practiced in the setting of a repressive environment such as a prison. Come to think of it, it is not much different than the "wishful thinking" approach.

The one difference is that the first approach is definitely positivist while the second at least recognizes that there is a world outside of the individual. Unfortunately it fails to recognize that it is not a single world with an overriding consciousness or moral structure. What is missing is the acknowledgement of power and politics. To put it crudely in terms of the prison, those on the outside are just as corrupt, manipulative, selfish,

caring, loving, aspiring and cooperative as those on the inside. We have just pretended, for the needs of our models and positions of advantage, that it is otherwise.

It was stated at the beginning of this essay that the one thing prisoners have in common is that they are in prison. What they lack in prison is freedom. What they often struggle for in prison is freedom or for ways to come to terms with their lack of freedom. This is the key to prison education. For, in that struggle, prisoners are not separated from those on the outside of prison. As educators, one cannot come to terms with our students as individuals who have broken any specific law, or in most cases set of laws. We can only deal with them as a group in an extremely odd and coercive total environment. By understanding the struggle for freedom, by aiding that struggle, by facilitating an understanding of that struggle perhaps they can see themselves in a wider historical, social and political context. That which may—just may—keep them out of prison in future, though our role is not to keep them out, but to facilitate an education and to empower them.

By aiding their struggle for freedom, however, I do not mean that we should help them to get out of jail. By freedom is meant the ability to satisfy their own requirements, material and cultural. The struggle for freedom includes attaining knowledge of those requirements and how to satisfy them, along with the power to effect that satisfaction. In this sense, they share a lack of freedom with most people on the outside. Critical education enables them to connect themselves with others in society to become part of a wider power struggle.

The approach to prison education that expresses this is a “critical” approach. By a “critical” approach it is meant an approach that engages the individual, the institution and society by laying bare the realities of power structures, social class, and manipulated inequalities. Most students in prison share a curious outlook on life largely developed in the institution (or at least that which we are initially allowed to see is a reflection of the person as prisoner). Prisoners share a curious dichotomy: the prisoner as individual anarchist and authoritarian. He is an individual anarchist in terms of explaining his non-prison existence as a way of justifying a variety of criminal activities. This carries with it a requisite degree of bravado and selfishness. He is authoritarian in that, in the prison environment, he keeps a level of tension and authoritarian interplay at a high degree in order to define himself as apart from the prison, as above parts of the prison. In this, the guards are seen as pigs, screws, etc., and sex offenders and stoolpigeons are seen as scum, non-humans fit only for elimination, preferably with a lot of pain inflicted first. And in this, they see themselves as better than some others and having the right to judge and execute. This can be seen as a reasonable response to living in an unre-

sonable environment, for their keepers also see themselves as better than and above the prisoner. For example, some senior prison administrators refer to their charges as children who have to be forced to do what is best for them whether they like it or not. What is best for them has to be measured in the tradition of positivism. The attitude often is "If I can't measure it or touch it, it is not real." An abstract thought or concept has little place in this world of positivistic administrators.

Prison administrators are frequently authoritarian as well. Their approach to education, reflecting current Federal government policy, is "forced education" to make prisoners "literate." The point that prison administrators have not been successful at forcing any other kind of "correction" seems to be lost to these prison administrators. As a generalization, the prison administrator can be seen as "the authoritarian team player." The administrator as "authoritarian teamplayer" and the prisoner as "authoritarian individual anarchist" are caricatures—a caricature that is a response to the environment of a prison where they will spend up to twenty-five years of their lives, whether as keeper or prisoner.

In this context the current paradigm, like previous paradigms, is a failure. What is needed is the development of an approach that is *pragmatic*—pragmatic in terms of the individual in the context of a prison that separates the individual from society. That approach is a critical approach empowering the individual. Through empowerment, the prisoner will educate him- or herself. In that sense, there is no "pedagogy for the repressed," because one cannot be benign nor neutral when something is done "for" or "to" the object of the educative (or control) procedure. The very expression implies the exercise of power coming down from above and thrust on the powerless. Education can help to give someone the "tools" by which they empower themselves.

Erling V. Christensen

Literacy, Hegemony, Liberation?

The Contradictions of Harvey Graff

Harvey J. Graff. *The Legacies of Literacy. Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Those who think that the attainment of universal levels of literacy will either solve pressing social problems like crime, or result in a more liberated social and political order, should ponder the conclusions which Harvey Graff arrives at after studying the place of literacy in western culture from Antiquity to the present. Graff quotes with approval a statement by Johan Galtung:

What would happen if the whole world became literate? Answer: not so very much, for the world is by and large structured in such a way that it is capable of absorbing the impact. But if the whole world consisted of literate, autonomous, critical, constructive people, capable of translating ideas into action, individually or collectively—the world would change. (p. 398)

This book argues, however, that literacy is more often and more effectively coupled with mechanisms of social control and that its ability to effect individual progress and social mobility constitutes a "literacy myth" which has hindered a proper understanding of the role and function of literacy in history. For Graff, literacy is not an independent variable. Rather it is the function of literacy which receives most of his attention; in other words, the role and place of literacy is very much historically determined and can only be understood in "its socio-historical context," something, Graff argues, most accounts of literacy have ignored.

Graff has organized his account of literacy chronologically, beginning with Antiquity, proceeding through the Middle Ages, Reformation, Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, and the "Nineteenth Century Origins of Our Times." This study is not based on primary research; rather Graff has synthesized a massive amount of secondary material, both theoretical and empirical dealing with literacy in diverse countries and periods, into a coherent thesis on the role of literacy. The book's title indicates Graff's aim. Literacy is usually studied in terms of change and linked with modernization, development or progress, "making it into one of the key elements in the larger parcel of characteristics and processes that remade a traditional, premodern world into the modern West" (p. 8). By focusing

on continuities and contradictions in the development of literacy, its role is seen to be much more conservative than usually presented; literacy becomes more a determined rather than a determining factor. Graff could just as easily have titled his book the "limits of literacy" as the "legacies of literacy."

For Graff, what is constant in the history of literacy is the "impressive power of the 'trinity' of literacy's primary uses." Major advances or shifts in literacy are responses to the needs of the economy, state or church. Religion in the West has the longest association with literacy and illustrates best what Graff means by continuities and traditions in the history of literacy. Economic development best demonstrates contradictions: for example, the Industrial Revolution's initial impact was to reduce not expand rates of literacy. However, the central concept Graff uses to explain the role of literacy is not indicated by his title, namely the concept of social and cultural hegemony, which he derives from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. It is this idea which underlines the book's focus on how throughout its history literacy is "attached to structures of control and authority, and is itself, in the process of its transmission, neutralized" (p. 390). For Graff, then, hegemony carries great analytical and interpretive weight, allowing him to avoid "the crudities of social control theories, modernization and enlightenment notions, ideas of overt coercion, and excessively voluntaristic interpretations" (p. 11). In Gramsci's theory, elites which have to rely on repressive force for maintaining their power over subordinate classes control weak states. In a hegemonic situation, subordinate classes accept their subordination, or rather the values and norms of the elites. Hegemony then "means the consensual basis of an existing political system within civil society." As a tool in this softer method of control, literacy and schooling have been especially useful. Graff argues that hegemonic relationships historically have involved class formation, recruitment and indoctrination. Until mass involvement in the political process, hegemony was a matter of the cohesion of elite groups and literacy was useful in creating a common elite culture, education and language, enabling them to control scarce resources like wealth, power and literacy itself. First with the Reformation and then especially in the nineteenth century, the function of literacy changed. The purpose of training a literate populace, Graff argues, was to secure their consent "to the direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group," and universal literacy is a device for stability and cohesion, not liberation.

Graff's historical and critical analysis of literacy not only derives from his consideration of its uses, but also from his threefold definition of what literacy means, which enables him to relate it to its various social and cultural contexts. His first definition is very basic, the ability to read and write. A large part of his historical reconstruction is simply an account of what literacy levels were in various historical periods, determined mainly

by signatures on documents like marriage records and wills. To counter the objection that these are too low a standard to apply, Graff introduces his second consideration; literacy is defined as "a technology or set of techniques for communications and for decoding and reproducing written or printed materials" (p. 4). In other words, literacy is something acquired or learned, in a way that speech is not. Graff feels that understanding literacy this way, rather than as at the root of attitudes required for economic development, modernization, political stability or raising the standard of living, allows a critique of the presumed uses. Throughout his book he argues that, when the claimed benefits of literacy are compared with empirical evidence, the results are much less than theoretical assumptions. Considering literacy as a skill or technology means that it is a changing historical and cultural product—Graff's third and most difficult task in defining literacy. His principal effort is devoted to reconstructing the function literacy played in different historical periods and how it interacted with the culture of that period. Here literacy's meaning is determined by its usefulness to the state, trade and church. In this light, literacy does not dissolve the oral culture or world, but is "formed, shaped and conditioned by the oral world that it penetrated. The oral and the literate ... need not be opposed as simple choices" (p. 5). Rather they interacted with each other and for many centuries reading itself was an oral, collective, not a private activity. Literacy as a hegemonic tool is rooted in this traditional use.

Graff's historical debunking of the literacy myth then underlines the long and detailed history of literacy which is the main part of the book. The historical treatment is at the basis of the conclusion of his critique of those who argue that today we face some sort of literacy crisis. Such an argument is based on a failure to understand the historical role and function that literacy has played. Before considering the implications of Graff's study for understanding literacy today, let us analyse the major conclusions derived from his historical treatment.

Literacy as a technique emerges from its role in Antiquity and the Medieval Period. At first, reading and writing were unprestigious crafts carrying little of the association with wealth and power that they would have later. In the early Middle Ages, the Church acquired a quasi-monopoly over learning and literacy rates fluctuated with such secular events as invasions, wars and plagues. While religious uses predominated, the needs of the state and commerce increasingly played a role. Even in the Merovingian court of the seventh century we see the development of one of the most characteristic features of Western literacy, namely that, unlike Ancient Rome, where slaves or ambitious men from the lower classes learned to read or write, it was the aristocracy who were now trained for the bureaucratic jobs requiring literacy skills. Also in eleventh-century Italy, we find the characteristic tendency of economic expansion leading to increased use of literacy. Throughout the history of the West, urbaniza-

tion, commerce and trade, and elementary schooling are related. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the numbers of literate rose, although not unilinearly. Ironically, the plagues and wars of the fourteenth century caused a decline in the numbers who could read and write, but an increase in literacy rates, as the poor and illiterate died in proportionally greater numbers than the wealthy and literate. In the long run, literacy rates rose as the catastrophies produced heresies, which in order to combat required more and better educated clergy. Also the commercial expansion of Renaissance Florence led to literacy rates of 25-35 per cent there. Most literates were absorbed by trade, commerce, finance, the Church and administration as "literacy was seen increasingly as a commodity with functional and economic values in the commercial context of fourteenth-century Italy." Renaissance humanism, on the other hand, contributed nothing to literacy; it was a program for educating the ruling classes and, as Graff cautions, there is no direct or necessary relationship between high intellectual achievements and high rates of literacy, nor is mass literacy a guarantee of high quality literary production. Thus he concludes that before the invention of printing, literacy rates of 5-10 per cent among males did not break the bonds of social or economic "restrictedness," and the literacy needs of the medieval community were rather well met. Most medieval people did not need to read and write for their occupation, and there was no effort to educate them.

Graff's discussion of the invention of the printing press on the eve of the Reformation attempts to show that the place of printing is often distorted in the history of literacy. The printing press was not the agent of change it is often made out to be. Early printed books copied hand-produced books and the subject matter was traditional—the Bible, devotional works and grammars. Little major change took place at first and printing contributed practically nothing to schooling and literacy. Nothing demonstrates the contradictions and continuities of literacy better than the Reformation of the sixteenth century. On the one hand, the first propaganda campaign with the help of the printing press was conducted. But rather than showing the development of a new, literate culture, it demonstrated the close relationship between the oral and literate. Leaflets and posters were disseminated but then read to illiterates; printing during the Reformation increased the amount of information available to the total population; it did not increase literacy rates. One event of the Reformation was instructive for the future use of printing, namely the Peasant Revolt of 1525. Until that Revolt, the reformers had linked mass participation with religious changes; book peddlers and colporteurs carried Reformation propaganda into the countryside. When reformers realized the threat to the social order implicit in the new technology, the number of polemical works declined and printing became a more controlled measure of propaganda. The lesson learned, the reformers advocated public, compulsory, institutional education. Protes-

tant doctrine stressed interpretation of the Scriptures for salvation which stimulated literacy. But the result was more traditional than innovative. Education was seen as a pious work and in Germany the mass provision of literacy was seen as a goal by both Church and religious reformers to shape the populace's religious and civil behaviour. The aim was mass memorization of the catechism and for that only mediocre levels of literacy were required. The paradox of the situation was that traditionally literacy had been highly restricted, although even before the Reformation that had begun to change. This legacy of restrictedness would not fully crumble until the nineteenth century in most of Europe. Where, however, it did decline earlier, as in parts of Germany and Sweden (where universal reading literacy was attained by the eighteenth century), the reasons were primarily conservative and religious. Also, neither of these areas was economically advanced; indeed Sweden was poverty-stricken. As Graff concludes here, "literacy neither followed from nor stimulated economic development" (p. 149).

The eighteenth century did see some rise in literacy rates in most countries of Europe but these levels were continuations of past trends towards schooling and literacy growing out of the Reformation tradition in countries like Germany and Sweden. What we do see in most German states is a shift from a religious morality to a more civic morality, but the contrast should not be exaggerated. In England and France, as in the past, the growth of commercial capitalism was most responsible for the increase in literacy, with the nobles, middle classes and upper levels of the skilled artisans becoming literate. However, this was not a break with past traditions but a continuation. Where the eighteenth century anticipated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was in the development of theories about universal education, although these were not yet applied in practice. The *philosophes* of the Enlightenment stressed the need for and importance of secular education to the nation. Although some Enlightenment thinkers were skeptical or fearful of mass education, education became a matter of deep concern. As religion waned as a legitimizing social sanction, education was seen as an alternative. Some progressive economic thinkers also recognized the barriers to economic reform presented by traditional mentalities and advocated popular education as a means of opening the minds of workers and peasants to new ideas. However, before the French and Industrial Revolutions, the application of these theories was limited by the need for child labour and the lack of resources in unreformed old regime states that could be allocated to education.

Eighteenth-century theories received practical application in the nineteenth century where literacy rates and schools expanded to near-universal levels. The issue among historians is not the advances but why they occurred. Three basic positions emerged, all of which shared the shortcoming of being based on a model of linear, progressive or evolutionary

change, which Graff attempts to overcome. The first and most simple-minded explanation was the liberal theory that literacy increased due to the efforts of enlightened reformers working for the good of the society despite the opposition of traditional elites. Other historians argue that the impetus came from below, from the working class itself which used education to advance its own interests. Here Graff is on weaker ground. The third view, and closest to Graff's, is that the state developed systems of education to further its own political and economic ends. To the expansion of education, Graff applies the concept of hegemony, which dominated in the end. Certainly the belief of conservative dinosaurs that education trained people to aspire beyond their station and destroyed traditional deferential attitudes died out. In opposition to feared subversive uses of literacy, there emerges a consensus on the controlled provision and use of literacy. Employers wanted literate workers not because their schooling was useful on the job but because properly schooled workers could be taught qualities that did not exist in a pre-industrial work environment, namely punctuality, respect, cleanliness, discipline and subordination. Literacy then trained people in a new set of values and morality, and was thus an efficient and necessary substitute for deference. Here we see how literacy related to the past. Those societies informed by a reformed Protestantism which attained the highest levels of literacy before the nineteenth century had, of course, used literacy to teach an approved social code. Neither the Enlightenment nor the secularization of education changed that aim; the moral bases of literacy remained in the development of hegemony, social relations and order and economic productivity in the nineteenth century. Education was the means by which the masses of Europe would come to accept new patterns of economic and political domination. And while Graff admits that there was a "positive side" (p. 264)—that it could contribute to progress in occupation, social mobility for individuals or struggles for organization and power—his emphasis is on the "negative" side of literacy, the successful integration of potentially revolutionary masses into a national consensus which protected the power and position of economic and political elites. But was that integration as complete as he implies?

In his analysis of the role of literacy in nineteenth-century states like France, Germany and England, Graff deflates some of the more exaggerated claims made about its influence. Hence in France, the Revolutions did not substitute any elementary educational institutions for the clerical system it destroyed and its initial impact was to set back rates of literacy because of the social turmoil and wars associated with it. However, in its ideal of compulsory and secular education, it left a strong legacy to the nineteenth century, so that while literacy grew in France, education became a political, religious and ideological battleground. England provides the best example of the hegemonic function of literacy in a period of dramatic social disruption produced by the Industrial Revolution. Educa-

tion, Graff notes, was "a Victorian obsession." The main concern was a desire to get all working-class children into school, "where value and attitude formation took precedence of cognitive training." The hegemonic function was particularly clear here: the school was to replace traditional working-class culture with a new moral order. Interestingly enough, it was not the Industrial Revolution itself which stimulated literacy nor did it depend upon it. Graff criticizes those historians who see literacy to be central to the development of the economy, a critique which applies today to bureaucrats who try "to justify investment in education in economic terms (as human capital)" (p. 317). As in the French Revolution, the initial impact of the Industrial Revolution was to reduce literacy rates; the employment of children in factories reduced the time available for schooling. The population growth accompanying industrialization strained what educational facilities existed; nor has recent research affirmed the dominant assumption that education is central to the process of industrialization and logically must precede it. Nor did the Industrial Revolution increase the chances of social mobility for educated workers. A literate labourer in the eighteenth century had greater chances for advancement than the educated son of a labourer in 1830. How then did the Industrial Revolution relate to literacy, if it was "not nourished by nor especially nourishing for literacy?" The working-class radicalism that industrialism produced gave rise to fears of revolution and efforts at mass education. Concerns about the quality of workers necessary for the new economy provided additional impetus. Schools did not teach specific skills, but they did teach new habits, rules and rhythms necessary for work in a factory. Traditional working-class culture had to be modified and the hegemony of the school established. Illiterates were stigmatized as lacking the training required for civilization and human progress. Perhaps the situation in twentieth-century prison education in Canada is not all that different from nineteenth-century England: "when reformers wrote of idleness, drunkenness, pauperism, vice, improvidence, crime, and especially ignorance, they spoke to the social 'problem' of those untrained and uncontrolled by the instillation of discipline and morality through controlled socialization aided by ... literacy" (p. 323). The success of this endeavour was the most significant contribution of literacy both then and later.

In his conclusion, Graff discusses the limits of literacy for the present. Universal, or near universal, rates of literacy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have not resulted in fundamental changes for nations, societies or individuals. The poor, both individuals and nations, have remained so. In countries like Canada and the United States, there are people who are illiterate or have only a limited education. These people usually suffer from some other social disadvantage; lack of education is only one manifestation of their deprivation. Their illiteracy is a result or reflection of other social factors such as being poor, or a member of an

ethnic minority, and “being literate provides no solution,” because developments in literacy tend to *follow* rather than cause economic and social development. Graff’s point is that literacy and education do not alter the class balance in a given society, although they may make that balance more palatable. This is why the concern about a “crisis of literacy” has to be put in an historical context. It is rooted in the bias towards the literate who dominate our schools. This bias is that of the middle and upper-middle classes and the dominant social group’s idea of culture, order, and values. It is no accident that fears about rising illiteracy came about in the 1970s, a period of growing social, economic and political difficulties for the West. The obsession with literacy or a “back to basics” is really a return to a mythical past that never was. Making everyone “literate” will not address the real roots of our problems: inequalities in the distribution of wealth and power.

If Graff’s book provides a needed corrective to historians and educators who overestimate the role of literacy in history and society, nevertheless the treatment of literacy is incomplete. Graff so focuses on the hegemonic functions of literacy, that he ignores its genuinely liberating aspects. His dialectic works only in one direction, between literacy and the religious, economic and political powers that have determined its role and use. While he is aware of the “positive side” of literacy uses, they do not receive the attention that they deserve. At one point, he does discuss the question of literacy as part of radical working-class culture in early nineteenth-century England and concludes that middle-class attempts to reintegrate the working class through education using alternative, safe books were generally successful. What is missing here is the importance of education in teaching the working class to organize and to develop its own class consciousness. The German Social Democratic Party grew out of workers’ educational societies and the party developed a huge cultural apparatus along with its political and economic organizations. And while neither the English nor German working class may have been “revolutionary,” in some abstract meaning of that term, it was not simply a matter of their being integrated into middle-class society and culture, but how they were able to modify partially the dominant political system through participation (the creation of the welfare state, for example). By focusing on the “positive side” of this dialectic, Graff would have given us a more complete account of the role and function of literacy.

Glen McDougall

Jeffrey H. Reiman. *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Class and Criminal Justice*. 2nd Edition. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984.

Reiman's aim is to show that the failure of the criminal justice system is really its success: its function is not to protect society nor to prevent crime but to divert attention from social and economic inequality. He maintains that, if the function of the criminal justice system were really to prevent crime, then "victimless" crimes would be decriminalized, programs would be developed to provide ex-offenders with real preparation and real opportunities in society, equal right to counsel would be transformed into the right to equal counsel, and crimes "in the suites" would be punished in proportion to their harm.

Instead, the criminal justice system punishes the poor while white-collar crimes, industrial polluters, corporate price-fixers, political influence peddlers and other corporate criminals are tolerated. By not reducing the volume of crime and by not preparing ex-offenders for life outside prison, the criminal justice system "works to create and reinforce a very particular set of beliefs about the world, about what is dangerous and what is not, who is a threat and who is not" (p. 33). Through these beliefs the relationship between class and crime is concealed, profit margins are ensured and capitalism is preserved.

To demonstrate that the criminal justice system is biased towards protecting the rich, Reiman cites statistics which show that working-class crimes (e.g., robbery, burglary, and theft) result in much longer sentences than so-called white-collar crime (embezzlement, fraud, income tax evasion). For example, time spent in prison range from an average of 44.4 months for robbery to only 11 months for fraud (p. 99).

Reiman also presents a number of tables showing the prison sentences for a number of white-collar criminals. For example, J. Clark, the president and chairman of Four Seasons Nursing Centre, received one year in prison for "losing" \$200 million of shareholders' money, and V. McGowan, manager of a branch of the Bank of America, siphoned off half-a-million in loans to friends but received only a six months' sentence, five years' probation and a \$3,600 fine.

Reiman argues that other types of white-collar and corporate crimes go completely unpunished because they are not recognized by the criminal justice system. Reiman maintains, however, that if industrial sites are unsafe and result in death, then employers are just as culpable as murderers. Yet the media tends to report industrial deaths as "accidents" or "dis-

asters,” despite the responsibility employers have in ensuring safe working conditions.

Reiman maintains that occupational hazards are a much greater threat to public safety than street crime. In fact, there were roughly three times as many deaths in America in 1980 from industrial “accidents” as deaths related to street crime (p. 55). This amounts to a murder every twenty-three minutes in America as compared with an occupational death every fourteen minutes (p. 56). According to Reiman:

To say that some of these workers died from accidents due to their own carelessness is about as helpful as saying that some of those who died at the hands of murderers asked for it. It overlooks the fact that where workers are careless, it is not because they love to live dangerously. They have production quotas to meet, quotas that they themselves do not set. If quotas were set with an eye to keeping work at a safe pace rather than to keeping production-to-wages ratio as high as possible, it might be reasonable to expect workers to take the time to be careful. Beyond this, we should bear in mind that the vast majority of occupational deaths result from disease, not accident, and disease is generally a function of conditions outside a worker’s control. (p. 56)

There is also the threat to public health and safety of other “crimes” such as industrial pollution, poor health care and poverty. Reiman states: “[W]e are led to believe that the criminal justice system is protecting us against the gravest threats to our well-being when, in fact, the system is only protecting us against some threats and not necessarily the greatest ones” (p. 41).

Reiman argues that white-collar crime is tolerated not because of a conspiracy of the rich: “big business” does not plan to have the criminal justice system fail. Nor does he argue that the rich can simply use the poor as a scapegoat for middle class frustrations and fear. Instead, the reason is located in the structure of capitalism as a mode of production. He maintains that the social relations we enter into in the work place are instrumental in creating a systematically distorted view of reality. His account of the nature and causes of this distortion forms one of the most important and controversial parts of this book.

Reiman also argues that employers pay workers for only a portion of the value which they create through the sale of their labour power. Employers keep the surplus which is created as profit. But the whole process of being forced to alienate labour by the hidden coercion established through a formally free labour market systematically distorts reality. As a result,

workers come to feel that it is entirely natural to be forced to work for someone else's profit, to leave democracy at the door step to the work place, and to be treated as a wage slave for capitalism.

According to Reiman, the capitalist social organization of production creates the conditions which lead workers into a false consciousness. Workers fail to recognize that the dangers which they experience are not simply part of the nature of work, but are preventable and if they are not prevented, then the employers are just as responsible for harm as any other criminal. But workers fail to recognize industrial crimes, only seeing acts of violence as portrayed by the mass media as "crime." As a result, there are increasing demands for more "law and order" and tougher sentencing directed at the poor but not the rich.

Reiman calls this distorted perception of reality "ideological" because it serves a number of important functions for the capitalist class. By defining crime in terms of the disadvantaged, discontent is channelled away from the rich. The effect is to conceal the nature of crime and mechanisms of crime and to give a false impression that society is being protected. This provides Reiman with ammunition to attack both liberal and conservative views of the criminal justice system.

However, despite its breadth of scope and the attempt to marshal data in support of the arguments, *The Rich Get Richer* has a number of weaknesses. The obvious bias in the criminal justice system is *not* just a function of distorted perceptions or the supposed failure of the working class to recognize the threat to health and safety of corporate crime. In fact, industrial polluters and political influence peddlers do *not* go unpunished simply because of "ideology." They are free to commit corporate and white-collar crimes mainly because of profit and the extensive ties between Boardrooms and the State.

While Reiman recognizes that the capitalist state is not a neutral arbitrator between competing interest groups, the relationship between class and the state is largely undeveloped. One important point to recognize is that the capitalist state is essentially an institution which is responsible for maintaining and promoting conditions suitable for capital accumulation on an increasingly international scale. Whether beliefs about the real nature and mechanisms of the criminal justice system are "correct" or not, ties between corporations and the state virtually guarantee that laws will favour the rich and powerful. This more than anything else is responsible for the failure to deal adequately with corporate criminals.

Reiman's emphasis on ideology, however, forces him to largely ignore the creative resistance and intelligence of the working class. As a result, he underestimates the work organized labour, and consumer and community action groups do in their important attempts to make corporations more accountable.

The second problem with *The Rich Get Richer* is that it pays little attention to the attempts by transnational corporations to avoid the law by exporting dangerous or defective goods to other countries; consequently, these attempts are neglected as a form of corporate crime. Transnational corporations can simply re-locate if state legislation is not in their favour. This type of crime includes, for example, the sale of pajamas which were supposedly fire retardant in Canada after they were banned in the United States. A similar case involved the sale of intra-uterine birth control devices to women in Third World countries when they were found to be dangerous in the First World countries.

These examples point to the difficulty of making corporations accountable as well as to the need for an international approach to the study of crime. However, the political economy of crime is still in the early stages of attempting to theorize relations of class, state and power; we still have a long way to go to grasp its international dimensions. In spite of these qualifications, Reiman's approach to the criminal justice system is an important contribution to a critical understanding of crime and social control and is well worth study.

Alan Dutton

David J. Rothman. *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order in the New Republic*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971.

David J. Rothman. *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980.

A cruel irony exists within our correctional system. While the ideal is that of rehabilitation, the reality is a national system of custodial enforcement and human inventory control. Yet the reality of our correctional system reflects only the injustice of that system; it does not reflect the cruel irony of the impotence of reformist ideals from which the concept of rehabilitation is derived. *This* irony consists of the fundamental incongruencies lurking within the questionable premise in which the primary objective of prisons is correction, rehabilitation, and reform. For example, even though the reasons for building prisons include to maintain social stability and develop moral conformity, the method of achieving these goals is through the reductionistic psychologisms of individual rehabilitation. Conversely, in order to prepare inmates for the outside world, prisons demand conformity, homogeneity, regularity, order, and deference.

Outside the prison walls, however, exist highly individuated and fragmented milieux of moral, social, and cultural contradictions where the personal search for conformity and homogeneity is an all but futile endeavour. Within these institutions, we demand of inmates not only individual rehabilitation and change, but also the contradictory demands of group conformity, homogeneity, and deference. The tragedy of this irony is the empirical failure of our contemporary prisons. (For a disturbing account of this failure within Canadian prisons, see Claire Culhane's *Still Barred from Prison: Social Injustice in Canada*, Black Rose Books, 1985. A review of this book is included in **Prison Journal** No. 6, January 1987.)

The question of how this tragedy came about is passionately raised in David Rothman's *The Discovery of the Asylum*, and *Conscience and Convenience*. In *The Discovery of the Asylum*, Rothman considers the incredible proliferation of penitentiaries, insane asylums, reformatories, and almshouses in antebellum America as a revolution in social practice that carried with it a huge legacy to the present. His *Conscience and Conven-*

ience outlines the later efforts of reformers to ameliorate the inhumane treatment within the same institutions their predecessors had built. The departure within these institutions include the development of probation, parole, prison reform, and the "invention" of juvenile delinquency.

In *The Discovery of the Asylum*, Rothman places the development of these institutions within the political and social upheaval of the antebellum period. This upheaval created an atmosphere of grave crisis for the legislators, administrators, philanthropists, and the other moral entrepreneurs concerned with what to them was rapid social disintegration. A perceived loss of moral community, familial ties, and individual obligations convinced the leaders of this era of the need for structures that would recreate order. It was the "discovery of the asylum" that afforded the promise of order and structure to this era. The proliferation of these institutions, from near non-existence before 1820 to numbering in the hundreds by 1860, was a clear reflection of the perceived need for social order. Penitentiaries, almshouses, reformatories and insane asylums were created to save society. As Rothman states, the emergence of these institutions was to "... promote the stability of a society at a moment when traditional ideas and practices appeared outmoded, constricted, and ineffective. The asylum, they believed, could restore a necessary social balance to the new republic and at the same time eliminate long-standing problems" (1971; p.18). Rothman's thesis is elegant in its simplicity. These institutions were built in this time period because of a necessity for social change; they were necessary in order to *create* social change. The perception of the era was that society was in a state of upheaval and rapid disintegration. The place of prisons, reformatories, insane asylums, and almshouses was to change the direction of society and to create stability and harmony within it.

The failure of the asylum to create social order was the first of a series of failures that culminated in the contemporary impotence of our correctional system. By the 1870s the moral reformists had lost hope in the asylum to create a better society and the various institutions degenerated into custodial stations for those who could not walk the fine line between the new-found radical individualism of the Jacksonian era and the social and moral constraints of the Republican legacy. By the 1890s, the focus had altered from changing the social order to changing the inmate.

This individualization of reform, of rehabilitation, and of therapy was completed a decade later. But the challenge of individual reform, was shackled by an historical amnesia of the origins of the institution within which reform was to take place. The arena of conflict between individual needs and social requirements was removed from society and transplanted onto the shoulders of those incarcerated within the institutions. The crisis was thus transformed from one of social order versus disorder to one of confinement versus rehabilitation.

The shift of paradoxes to that of confinement versus rehabilitation is the basis for the ameliorative reforms which Rothman deals with in his second work *Conscience and Convenience*. If we read rehabilitation for conscience and confinement for convenience, the logical progression of this work is obvious. To Rothman, the new reformers of the twentieth century were constrained not by the failure of Jacksonian policy, but rather by its limited success. For several decades the asylums had grown, entrenched themselves and developed professional staff and bureaucracies who perpetuated them. Conscience was severely hampered in this antagonistic relationship with convenience. Rehabilitation was forced to develop within the structures of failed institutions that had lost their original purpose. But their existence was as strong and vibrant as ever. It was the moral agenda of rehabilitation that lost out in the struggle. With an *ad hoc* sense of urgency, moral and institutional reforms became mere appendages to an overpowering structure of confinement and control.

The value of Rothman's scholarship lies in the historical continuum he presents. His ability to cast a provocative and disturbing historical light on our present correctional system is both exciting and frightening. It is exciting in that it delivers a historical justification for those reformers, on either side of iron bars, who demand that society dismantle the oppressive structures of the prison, the asylum, or the detention home in favour of a rehabilitative system that focuses on both individual and social culpability. It creates the beginnings of a dialogue based on social redress and reform. In short, it places culpability on all of our shoulders.

Rothman's thesis is frightening because of his demand for the power relations within these institutions to be stripped bare of their ideological mystifications. The nakedness of such an emperor could lead in two directions. It could force the hand of state and bureaucratic control, thus leaving these institutions to justify themselves through brute violence. Or it could mark the beginning of an historically informed dialogue that attempts to make sense of the oppressive irrationality of the concrete, the iron, and the vicious coercion that constitutes our correctional system. It is the challenge of these alternative futures that makes Rothman's historical work so worthwhile.

Ronald N. McGivern

Daniel Glaser. "Criminality Theories and Behavioral Images," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 61, March 1956.

Fortunately, some theoretical sociology seems to stand the test of time, if usefulness be a criterion for the test. Such an article is Glaser's "Criminality Theories and Behavioral Images," first published in 1956. Glaser critically examines the prevalent theories of criminal behaviour in terms of the underlying assumptions of each, based on particular behavioural images of "human nature." Important in this examination is his notion of "connectedness" or "disconnectedness" of theory to or from empirical phenomena, observable "criminal" behaviour. Indeed, while his conclusions provide a useful critical stance for the evaluation of much theory and research in criminology, his article—as an unintended consequence—also provides a possible theoretical model for educators in the field of prison education.

Glaser distinguishes three kinds of criminality theories: "monistic" theories, based on a single type of behavioural image; "pluralistic" theories, which involve two or more rather distinct behavioural images; and "integrative" theories, "which attempt to subsume the aspects of behavior dealt with in pluralistic theories under a single relatively complex behavioral image" (p. 484). The criteria he uses in his examination are the following: (1) the interconnectedness of explanatory imagery; (2) the comprehensiveness of theory in terms of the types of crimes to which it is applicable; and (3) the implications in regard to empirical research. For example, he argues:

Underlying prevailing monistic criminality theories, the following types of imagery may be distinguished: spontaneity, possession, rationality, external forces, internal mechanisms, and role. (*Ibid.*)

The image of spontaneity, he claims, underlies the "free-will" criminality theory which is implicit in the judicial notion of a person "choosing" between right and wrong. "Such an explanation is the epitome of disconnectedness, since it indicates inability or unwillingness to relate the behaviour to anything else" (p. 485), such as economic factors or group associations.

It is in a modification of E.H. Sutherland's (1955) integrative theory of differential association that Glaser finds a criminality theory that usefully

conforms to his three above criteria. Essentially, Sutherland proposed that "A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law" (Sutherland, 1955, p. 78). Definitions are arrived at through social interaction and association. Glaser maintains: "Differential association theory channels research by knitting diverse data together, whereas multiple-factor conceptions lead to the collection of disparate observations" (p. 490). Nonetheless, criticisms of Sutherland's theory have been such as to require a restatement of it to "make its behavioral referent less ambiguous" (p. 491).

Glaser proposes instead a theory of differential *identification*: "a person pursues criminal behavior to the extent that he identifies himself with real or imaginary persons from whose perspective his criminal behavior seems acceptable" (p. 492). Such a theory can then account for the "relevance for each individual case of criminality, of economic conditions, prior frustrations, learned moral creeds, group participations, or other features of an individual's life" (*Ibid.*). He argues that for the most part people who are inclined to crime refrain from it "in situations where they play satisfying conventional roles in which crime would threaten their acceptance" (p. 493). When in a position of playing satisfying roles, Glaser says, "their identification with non-criminal others may eventually make them anti-criminal. This is the essence of rehabilitation" (*Ibid.*). Such identification is also, in many ways, the essence of the role of the prison educator, a role that is both part of the wider society and yet critical of that society, frequently working for social change. The role of university student, related to that of prison educator, offers to the inmate an alternative role identity to that of criminal, a role that can assist in re-entry back into society.

The author argues that his theory of differential identification, modified from Sutherland's theory, is integrative in connecting social factors with specific individual life histories; is comprehensive in that it can be applied to situational or accidental crimes as well as to planned crimes; and is useful in a number of empirical applications, including the evaluation of rehabilitative programs. He further claims, in conclusion, that it integrates research from a variety of perspectives (anthropology, sociology, psychology and psychiatry) on criminality theory "by giving that theory an image of behavior as role-playing" (p. 497).

Indeed, the notion of role-playing, with its associated identification and socialization aspects, integrates social factors and individual factors in an explanatory framework. Theories which place the onus of criminal behaviour entirely on either social factors or on individual factors tend to view human actors as automatons operating on the basis of only external "forces" or internal mechanisms; such theories are, as Glaser argues, one-sided in viewing the individual in isolation rather than as part of the social fabric which we all share. The result of such theories is to make those labelled as criminals separate and distinct from the rest of common

humanity, thereby contributing to the dehumanization process that occurs in institutionalization. Glaser's theory, whatever its shortcomings, allows us to view criminal behaviour as human behaviour, as part of the same social processes in which we all interact.

Paul Biscop

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Lorne Brown. *When Freedom Was Lost*. Montreal: Black Rose Press, 1987

In light of Canada's current crisis of high unemployment the recent publication of Lorne Brown's book *When Freedom Was Lost* is timely. His book addresses the plight of the unemployed during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The book's main foci are the relief camps of the 1930s and the "On-to-Ottawa Trek." Not being the first time such topics have been dealt with in academic writings, one must ask what new contribution Brown's book makes, particularly in light of the 1985 publication of Victor Howard's *We Were the Salt of the Earth: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot*.

While Howard's book incorporates a section on the relief camps, this is fairly incidental to the main focus of the book: the trek and the riot. Howard only examines the camps to set the pre-conditions for the strikes of relief camp workers in Vancouver leading to the trek. Again, the other well known writing in this area, Victor Hoar's edited book, *Recollections of the On To Ottawa Trek*, focuses primarily on the trek through the recollections of a participant, Ronald Liversedge. Brown, however, devotes as much attention to the relief camps as to the trek, and the Regina Riot is seen as the end of a long, intense process of struggle against conditions in the relief camps.

The reason for Brown focusing equal attention on the camps and the trek is that one of Brown's stated intentions in writing the book is to demonstrate how the single, unemployed youth were the chief victims of the R. B. Bennett government's strategy for dealing with the depression. More specifically, as indicated by the book's subtitle, *The Unemployed, the Agitator, and the State*, Brown aims to examine the attempts of the unemployed youth to organize and the state's response to this force. In such a way Brown offers something more than the preceding books in this area of study. There is an attempt to understand these important points in Canadian history of the relief camps, the strikes and the trek and riot, as parts of a process of struggle and change. The book takes us from the objective fact of the tens of thousands of unemployed—particularly the unemployed single men, to the relief camps instituted by the federal government under pressure from the public and provinces to do something about the unemployed—to the fightback by the unemployed of the camps against the inadequacies of the camp system. This is juxtaposed with the government's response to this fightback leading to the final showdown between the agitator and the state in this process, i.e. the Regina Riot.

Unfortunately, Brown does not take his theme far enough—either in terms of his brief theoretical statement in the introduction or in terms of an adequate analysis of the social processes that accounted for the relief camps, strikes, trek and riot. At the outset Brown says, “[What] remains constant is that progressive social change will by necessity have to be preceded by agitation, organization, and militant struggle” (p. 15). Some interpretation of the events covered in the book are made in the last chapter along the lines of the above quotation, giving credit to the contribution of the relief camp workers’ struggle in bringing down the Bennett government and the shutting down of the relief camps. But throughout the book, no other analysis is made of the relationship between struggle and social change.

Brown’s book is theoretically light, to say the least. What analysis does exist is at best implicit. Brown sets the stage for analysis, but stops short of dissecting the situation in terms of power relations. Why were the unemployed wanderers perceived as a threat and a threat to what? At the federal level, why was the status quo so adamantly opposed to the demands of the strikers?

Brown could also have applied the concept of social control to great advantage. Through careful documentation Brown has interspersed every chapter with an ideological content, demonstrating the values and predominant views of the active parties, particularly at the provincial and federal levels of government, as well as opinions expressed through newspapers. There is no doubt left in the mind of the reader that the state, particularly at the federal level, had reasons of social control in instituting the relief camps rather than welfare and relief motives. But again Brown disappoints us and leaves the reader to draw connections between the state’s attitudes and actions and power relations in Canadian society.

Brown avoids using the term state and instead writes of “the authorities,” never defining who or what “the authorities” are nor what their role is in society.

At another point in the brief introduction, in comparing the 1930s and 1980s, Brown states:

the governments of the day have attempted to force working people, and especially the least protected and hence the poorest, to bear the brunt of the depression. The big corporations and the economic elite can thus be spared the full consequences of what they have wrought. (p. 14)

Brown is offering some analysis of the role of the state in a capitalist society experiencing an economic crisis. At the end of the introduction Brown offers his second and final theoretical position: “[P]rogressive social change will by necessity have to be preceded by agitation, organization, and militant struggle” (p.15).

These two statements are the closest Brown comes to analyzing Canadian society in terms of the main actors and time period he has chosen to examine. Although Brown suggests challenging theoretical positions at the outset, his book comprises ten chapters of description of events. It is only in the eleventh chapter, "The Political Repercussions and the Legacy of the Trek," that Brown engages in any degree of analysis. And this is scant. In effect, Brown offers us no more than a pluralist view (a watered-down one) of Canadian society by neglecting to carry out implied analysis in his introduction.

Having suggested that in economic crisis Canadian governments victimize a certain sector of the Canadian population, Brown does not outline and analyze the Bennett regime's monetary and fiscal policies—the various policies they came up with to combat a depressed economy. Nor does Brown offer even a basic explanation of the depression supposedly caused by the "big corporations and the economic elite" (p.14). In essence, Brown only gives lip service to some general analysis of capitalist economic crisis, the role of the state and the way social change is brought about.

The time period covered is the years of the R.B. Bennett government, 1930 to 1935. Roughly, these years correspond to the beginnings of national organizing of the unemployed and the conclusion of the On-to-Ottawa Trek. The topic of the unemployed, particularly in depressed times, is an important one for several reasons. First, the unemployed are a disenfranchised sector of society being denied access to the basic means of subsistence/existence; they are unable to sell their labour power in exchange for a wage or salary (the limited social wages of UI and welfare notwithstanding). Second, the unemployed during depressed times are a significant reserve army of workers that help to depress pay rates and reduce working condition standards and supply an abundance of scab workers such as we have witnessed recently with the Letter Carriers' strike. Thus, unemployment is a threat to working people who do have jobs. Finally, an historical lesson can be learnt from studying the tens of thousands of unemployed today and showing similarities and differences with responses to unemployment in the past.

Unfortunately Brown's book does little to aid in this understanding. It does, however, fill a gap, a descriptive gap. While not as tedious as some others, it lacks theoretical depth and structure.

Anne Burger

Brian Fawcett. *Cambodia, A book for people who find television too slow*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987.

For the past four months, I have witnessed a professor of oddities: a teacher of English, the forty-three-year-old writer Brian Fawcett who wrote *Cambodia, A book for people who find television too slow*, a unique look at the world of mind control and genocide, written in a manner that defies standard reviewing.

Brian Fawcett peers owlshly through his glasses towards his students at Mountain Institution, while perched insolently cross-legged on his desk, resplendent in his wrinkled and baggy designer (prison-type?) clothes, suspicious as always of all authority. Only this time he is authority. Fawcett expounds on his conception of the fading social, artistic and intellectual discourse available to the general public.

This paradoxical author, both submitting to authority (he teaches in prison) and flaunting authority (he smokes where he shouldn't), expounds in his course about dialogue. "University is dialogue," he snorts. "Avoid the ten-dollar words and use your dictionary."

After several weeks, he introduces his book *Cambodia* as required reading. More confusion. The country Cambodia is described in the book's literal sub-text, a story in itself. The main body of his 207-page volume is an initially confusing kaleidoscope of incidents drawn from the author's shifting perspective. But the stories carry a common thread and expose the culture of the global village; how it works to destroy our memory and dim our imagination.

But why Cambodia? "I decided to take on the most difficult subject matter," announced Fawcett to the class. "Cambodia seemed to be the most obvious thing to do, the least understood." The underlying connection of modern capitalism's devouring spirit and the thrust to destroy our abilities to think and understand is the subject of literacy. The need for a literate understanding of world events is the message behind Fawcett's stories.

His first chapter, "On the Difficulties of Crowd Control," exposes the fiction of television news. Said Fawcett, "The news on TV is programmed; it is essentially fiction; and that fiction is universal in that it is *humanly toxic* to us now. We are assailed, overwhelmed by the fictional." Squatting before his class of inmates, he reinforces the message: "The white noise [of irrelevancy] is dulling our sensitivities to the realities of real people in real situations."

Fawcett examines entrepreneurship when he artfully introduces Marshall McLuhan to the Apostle Paul, on the road to Damascus. Marshall McLuhan's comic role in the fantasy dialogue (as a bad camel rider and

willing conversationalist with Paul) is both amusing and interesting. The dialogue provides a vehicle by which the reader receives Paul's important information about franchising religion.

Fawcett, in a gross overstatement, characterizes Paul as contributing to "the control of human beings and their imaginations," likening Paul to Lee Iacocca (the Chairman of the Chrysler Corporation) and Henry Ford (the Chairman of the Ford Motor Company), in their collective entrepreneurial drives. But the point is made about the control of human beings, through control of the issues of what we think and what we believe.

The chapter entitled "Universal Chicken," with its iconographic images of Pepsi and Burger-King, startles us with the stripping away of what is, in Fawcett's terms, the "Planet of the Franchises." He seeks our tender underbelly of inner conflicts, probing our secret quest for peculiar singularities. "It is always the singularity of the material world that made thinking pleasurable," writes Fawcett. And we are left strangely troubled, connecting "Big Macs" to the Orwellian concept of thought control. We're manipulated. Are we manipulated? By hamburgers?

"The Hinton Body Bag" episode demolishes our comfortable thought of television as news. This time, developing on a true story, Fawcett illuminates the staging and the need to fictionalize for the six o'clock news. Other episodes, a series of short essays, from imaginary encounters with Reggie Jackson and Malcolm Lowry, to fake German POWs, all carry the theme of deciphering the social text. As Fawcett verbalizes to his class: "What you see is not necessarily what you get!" We are asked to read and consider his (make-believe?) Tibetan prayer. The prayer seems to summarize the purpose of the writing: "Be lamps unto yourself, be your own refuge always, and accept no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as if it were a lamp. Do not look for refuge to anyone or anything besides yourself [H]olding fast as his own refuge to the Truth, shall by his anxiety to learn, reach the very topmost height." And anxious we feel as the class attempts to comprehend the parables.

The "Satellite Dish" chapter simply and graphically illustrates the coming of the "Global Village" and of the worldview according to Los Angeles. As television mostly centres on that town, both in content and productions, it follows that Los Angelean values and ideals will soon be firmly implanted in every small town and community in North America. The ability to produce people willing to support capitalism is the basic idea behind the organization of media; the same messages with the same subliminal contents, seeking to create the universal consumer, devoid of individual preferences and differences. Fawcett develops this disturbing theme: that of creating the desire for identical wants and needs amongst the people. And back again we are brought to the subject of mind control. Or is it just control?

The sub-text story

The serious and contemplative Fawcett emerges in the chilling, literal, sub-text story. Plunging into Cambodia's own "heart of darkness," the author dispenses with humour to remind us that the twins of memory and imagination were both capital offenses in Khmer Rouge Cambodia. Impressing his inmate class with facts and anecdotes drawn from original observers and even United Nations' reports, Fawcett reads from his publication: "Most of your neighbours executed for criminal tendencies We have given up on conversation, we watch television instead. Pass the cans of Pepsi ... fashionable amusement is appropriate." His captive audience squirms collectively, but cannot escape.

Fawcett sees bureaucracy and genocide "twinning" in the phenomenal growth of twentieth century authority. Concluding his "Congo" chapter where "between 15 and 40 million Africans died ... either by murder or starvation," Fawcett claims that the memory of the Congo massacres has been "obliterated from Western consciousness" and even from African tribal cultures that were subject to it. So, what is Fawcett getting at here? He has tackled the serious issues of genocide and mind control in an entertaining (can this subject *ever* be entertaining?) manner. Writing trivia as his main text, writing the important sub-text story literally below, Fawcett makes a statement about literacy, urging us all to seek below the "main text" (by peering through the "white noise" as he explains it), to find real truth and real understanding.

Some of Fawcett's university students angrily quit his English course. Others were at first puzzled, but eventually became aware of the way we *all* succumb to the manipulation by media; media in the service of big business and governments. Said one student, "One cannot be indifferent to Fawcett. You like him or you hate him." Fawcett's thrust, both in his book and in his teaching, is for universal literacy with the need for critical examination of *all* information. Why? "Because without literacy and understanding," says Fawcett, "humanity is subject to *absolute* domination by an evil few."

Alan Winter

Untitled

I can't sleep in summer
 with every dry night pulling the breath from my lungs
I don't turn my back to the sun
 nor the moon

 The winter's crisp wind
floats cautiously 4 months away
 I will sleep then ...
 4 long months

I have sweated ... and grown
walked far for a cold drink
child of the rain
 dreams of his bare feet in the snow
he will wait long for that

Mike Arnold

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